

"In the later days, the sun shall rise from the west". Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)

Angels of God

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(Sufism and Kabbalah) 20

Functions of the Archangels 27

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allahu anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.



The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 195 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

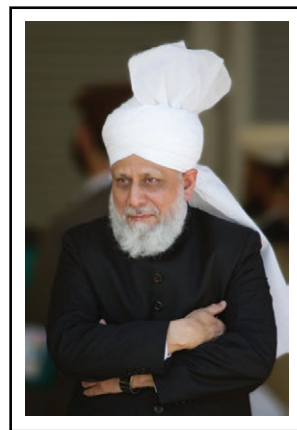
The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hadrat Ahmad(as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257).

It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifat-ul-Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah.

www.alislam.org



Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifat-ul-Masih V

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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
جَاعِلِ الْمَلَكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولَى أَجْنَحَةٍ
مَّثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبْعٌ ۖ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا
يَشَاءُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ②

(Al-Fatir -2)

[35:2] All praise belongs to Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, Who employs the angels as messengers, having wings, two, three, and four. He adds to His creation whatever He pleases; for Allah has power over all things.

IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

ANGELS DESCEND WITH THE ADVENT OF A KHALIFAH

("Fath-e-Islam," Ruhani Khazain, Vol. 3, pp. 12-13, Footnote.)

Someone might wonder what is the meaning of the descent of angels? It is the way of Allah that when a messenger or a prophet or a *muhaddath* descends from heaven for the reform of people, such angels descend with him who convey guidance to eager hearts and incline them towards good, and they continue their descent until the darkness of disbelief and misguidance is removed and the dawn of faith and righteousness appears. As Allah the Glorious says:

"Therein descend angels and the Spirit with their Lord's decrees concerning everything. Peace---so will it be even at the rising of the dawn." (97:5-6)

Thus the descent of angels and of the Holy Spirit from heaven takes place when a great personality invested with the robe of *khilafah* and honored with the word of God descends to the earth. Such a one is specially bestowed the Holy Spirit and the angels who accompany him descend on the eager hearts of the whole world. Then, wherever people possessing appropriate capacity are found, the reflection of that light falls upon them and a glow spreads over the whole universe. Through the holy influence of the angels good ideas surge up in the hearts and the Unity of God becomes dear. A spirit of the truth-loving and truth-seeking is breathed into hearts that are straightforward, and the weak are strengthened and a wind begins to blow which helps the purpose and goal of that reformer. By the urging of a hidden hand, people begin to move towards goodness and a movement starts among nations. Then the ignorant ones imagine that the ideas of the world have of themselves taken a turn in the direction of truth, but in reality it is the doing of the angels who descend from heaven with God's *khalifah* and bestow extraordinary powers for accepting and understanding the truth.

They awaken those who are asleep, and alert those who are heedless, and open the ears of the deaf, and breathe the spirit of life into the dead and pull out those who are in graves. Then suddenly, people begin to open their eyes and their hearts begin to perceive those matters which were previously hidden.

These angels are not something separate from God's *khalifah*. They are the light of His countenance and they are the bright signs of His resolve who, by their magnetic power, draw to themselves everyone who is in accord with them whether physically he is near or far, or whether he is known or is a stranger, and is even unaware of the name of the *khalifah*.

Whatever movement towards good takes place at the time and whatever eagerness for the acceptance of truth is generated, whether in the people of Asia, or of Europe, or of America, is manifested through the urging of the angels that descend with God's *khalifah*. This is Divine law which never changes and is easy to understand.



EDITORIAL

FALL 2013

Belief in angels is one of the six articles of faith prescribed for every Muslim. The Holy Qur'an mentions angels, some by name, their functions and their being in service of God. The very first revelation to Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) came through the angel Gabriel. This occurred when the Holy Prophet(sa) was unaware that he was to become a messenger of God. He clearly saw the angel and described him to his wife and the words that were spoken by him. Every Muslim has a firm belief in the existence of angels and their importance in being a connection with God.

So many righteous people in addition to the prophets of God have attested to the existence of the angels throughout the history of religion. All religions have mentioned the existence and the functions of angels in one form or another. Their description may vary from religion to religion but there is no doubt that all religions believe in their existence. Some religions have even gone so far as to worship the angels. Even the faiths that existed in pre-historic times have left impressions about the angels through art forms.



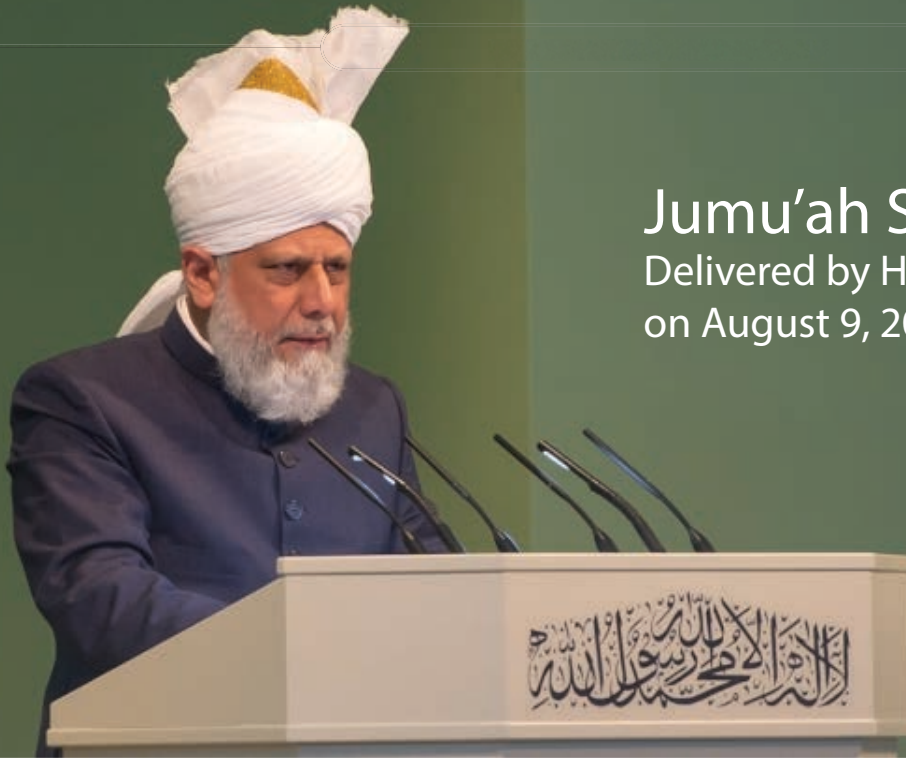
In the modern era, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as), founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community provided detailed knowledge about the working of the angels. His knowledge was based on personal experiences and bears the conviction of certainty, as opposed to the fairy tales and fables we so often hear. Not only did he personally experience this interaction with angels, his teachings and prayers produced companions and disciples whose spiritual caliber allowed the same. The existence of angels is intimately tied to the existence of God and is therefore, fundamental to understanding the universal order of God. Through His angels, God sustains the continual operational systems within nature, and provides the means by which humanity is guided to eventually achieve a union with its Creator.

The story of Adam(as) in the Holy Qur'an mentions the angels as key players in the discussion about making him the successor of God on earth. This is where the distinction between Iblis (Lucifer) and the angels is made. Angels are described as the servants of God, having no choice of disobedience, and Iblis being the entity that defies the commands of God. Human beings were given the choice to follow the behavior of angels, unquestionable obedience to God, or to follow Iblis and defy and ignore the commands of God.

Islam has presented extensive details about the function of angels through the Holy Qur'an and the ah-Hadith (quotations of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa)). In this issue, we have compiled various articles to present readers with the Islamic viewpoint about angels. In the modern times, people hesitate to talk about angels because it may sound like unscientific gibberish. The knowledge of the unseen may embarrass those who have not experienced it, but it cannot refute the existence of this creation of Allah.

It is our hope that this material will give some guidance to interested readers about the existence of angels. It will also shed some light on some current beliefs such as guardian angels, their roles and the Islamic viewpoint about them.





Jumu'ah Sermon Synopsis

Delivered by Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad
on August 9, 2013

Objections are raised about Islam today that God forbid, it is a harsh, extremist faith. Recently someone wrote in the USA that Friday is a day of disorder in Islam and raised many other objections against Islam.

Our Jama'at contacted the publication which published the piece and one of our young men wrote a good piece in response explaining the beautiful teaching of Islam, objectives of Islamic teaching and objectives of Friday in Islam. Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih has further instructed them on how to compose articles in this regard. Bearing witness/testifying is required when there is a problem between two parties so that the reality of the matter is clarified and dispensing of justice is made easy. However, if the very testimony is false, it is possible that the decision of the decision-maker is not right, in fact even the wrong decision can be given. In this regard the sin is on the person who gives false testimony.

Some people do give wrong testimony to benefit their near and dear ones. When marital problems, khula or divorce, come before the Qadha Board, sometimes the statements given are not based on truth and reality. Similarly, for temporary advantage, some people abandon Taqwa in business dealings and thus obtain piece of fire. The Hadith which cites 'a piece of fire' is about inheritance problems between two brothers. When the Holy Prophet(sa) informed them that they were as if obtaining a piece of fire, they were overwhelmed and said they relinquished their rights. The Promised Messiah(as) said that although the Gospels teach to love one's enemy they do not teach staying firm on justice in the face of injustice and persecution by peoples.

He said it is easy to be kind and generous to the enemy but it is most difficult to protect the rights of the enemy and to stay firm on justice in disagreements, contests etc. and only the gallant can practice this. Most people can show love to their enemy and do sweet-talking with them but go on to usurp their rights.

The promises we make in our covenant of Bai'at are, firstly that we shall abstain from *shirk* (association of any partner with God) right up to the day of our death. That we shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not be carried away by passions. That we shall regularly offer the five daily Prayers and invoke Durud and routinely ask for God's forgiveness and will remember His bounties. We need to self-reflect and see how much we fulfil these pledges. We should be clear that we will be held accountable about our covenants.

People will be answerable on every level. The last Friday sermon elucidated rights of orphans as a pledge and one will be held accountable over it. Similarly, rulers will be answerable for not governing correctly as will the masses/public for not paying their dues. Unfortunately the condition of Muslim leaders is like this and they appear unafraid as if they will not be held accountable



ADAM & THE ANGELS

CREATION OF ADAM

Shahina Bashir

'And when thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth,' they said: 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood? — and we glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' He answered: 'I know what you know not.' (Qur'an 2:31)

Although the verse quoted above does not mention Adam(as) by name, it is the first time that the Qur'an introduces the topic of creation of Adam(as) and the response by the angels. The Holy Qur'an and the hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) state that God had sent a prophet to every nation and every people. The chain of prophethood began with Adam(as) and culminated with the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa). Many Muslims have wrongly concluded that Adamas was the first human being who was created and the entire human race is the descendant of Adam(as) and his wife Eve (Hawwa in Arabic). Such a view stands contrary to the scientific findings regarding the evolution of mankind. The world has undergone several cycles of creation and civilization. The person of Adam(as) as referred to in the Qur'an is the ancestor of the modern man.

Over the course of time, many civilizations and races have come and gone. During these changes many Adams(as) appeared and perished. Thus, Adam(as) was merely a link to the present cycle of creation and as such was not the first human that existed on earth. This view of the rise and fall of civilizations and the existence of many Adams has been supported by various Muslim savants. One such sage was Muhy-ud-Din ibn 'Arabi(rh). Referring to a vision he mentioned that he saw himself performing the circuit of the Ka'aba. A man appeared before him and told him that he was one of his ancestors. Ibn 'Arabi asked, "How long is it since you died?" The man answered that he has been dead for more than forty-thousand years. "But this period is much more than what separates us from Adam," Ibn 'Arabi said. The man replied, "Of which Adam are you speaking? About the Adam who is nearest to you or some other?"

When Ibn 'Arabi heard this, he remembered the saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) that God had brought into being no less than a hundred thousand Adams, and Ibn 'Arabi concluded that the man he encountered was one of the previous Adams.

That Adam(as) was not the first human to walk the earth is also supported by the Qur'anic verse mentioned earlier where God tells the angels that He was about to place a vicegerent, a *khalifah*, in the earth. Since the word vicegerent means a successor there had to be a community of people already existing for Adam(as) to be a successor for them.

Angels' objection to the appointment of Adam as a *khalifah*

When God told the angels about His intention of placing a vicegerent on the earth, they retorted, 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood? — and we glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' But how could the angels even dare object to something God says when they do not even have the ability to go against the will of God as they are not endowed with the ability to choose? The apparent objection raised by the angels was not really so. It was rather the angels wanted to be enlightened and to gain knowledge. Whenever God raises a new prophet, a revolution or change is brought about in the world and a new era is ushered. When such a state appears whatever system existed is destroyed and a new world order is created. Adam(as) was the first messenger of the new world order.

Before the coming of Adam(as), the existing people lived in ignorance and had no morals. They were no better than animals and lived in a lawless society. With the introduction of the Law brought by Adam(as), the concept of sin came into being as sin is nothing but the breaking of the Law. The angels, with their limited understanding, saw that the introduction of Law will bring about crimes and bloodshed the result of which would be the creation of disorder. They saw only the darker side while God being All-Knowing saw the brighter side. God was going to make Adam the herald for waking up the spiritually dead. Through him God would be able to manifest Himself and make His attributes known to men and lead them to righteousness. He would not leave them wandering blindly but would instead guide mankind onto the straight path.



Adamas Endowed with Knowledge

“And He taught Adam all the names, then He put the objects of these names before the angels and said: ‘Tell Me the names of these, if you are right.’” (Qur’an 2:32)

God not only taught Adam(as) how to communicate through a well-developed language, He also gave him the knowledge of His attributes. Knowing these attributes is essential for man to attain the spiritual level which would draw him nearer to his Creator. By teaching man His attributes, God made a distinction between man and angels. Whereas God enabled man to imbibe in him these attributes, the angels were created with a limitation. The angels differed because they were endowed with a limited capacity of manifesting the divine attributes. The Qur’an states that “They (the angels) do what they are bidden to do” (66:7). This statement implies that angels do not have the gift of free will and unlike man are not able to make a choice.

The angels were well aware of their limitations and knew that they were not capable of reflecting all of God’s attributes. They were quick to confess that they could only express those attributes which God Himself bestowed upon them.

“And remember the time when We said to the angels: ‘Submit to Adam,’ and they all submitted. But Iblis did not. He refused and was too proud; and he was of the disbelievers.” (Qur’an 2:35)

When God had completed His favors upon Adam(as) and appointed him as a prophet, He commanded the angels to submit to Adam(as). Several translations of the Qur’an have used the word “prostrate” as translation for “sujud”. This translation makes it appear that God had instructed the angels to prostrate before Adam as one would prostrate to God. Explaining the true meaning and context of the verse, Promised Messiah, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as) said, “The angels were commanded to serve man humbly and to devote themselves to his service as if they were prostrating themselves before him. So the angels all fell into prostration before the perfect man, but satan was deprived of this good fortune.”

The word “sujud” in the verse means “submission” or “obedience” and therefore it indicates that God commanded the angels to serve Adam(as), that is, to help and assist him in his mission.



A Note about Iblis

Contrary to belief held by many Muslims, Iblis was not a ‘fallen’ angel. While angels are unable to be disobedient to God, Iblis clearly showed outright arrogance and disobedience. The Qur’an tells us that Iblis was a jinn, a secret creation, who was haughty and insolent.

Conclusion

When God created Adam(as), He knew what would be the outcome despite of the angels’ so-called objections. Man has been endowed with the ability to raise himself to a high spiritual status or abase himself to the lowest level. The object of the angels is to assist man by the command of God. Prophets, who have attained the highest spiritual rank and nearness to God, have been supported and helped by the angels to carry out their missions to the fullest. The help of the angels is not limited to only the prophets but to all of mankind who strive in the way to righteousness.



NEED FOR ANGELS

Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad
Khalifat-ul-Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him)

(Translated from 'Anwar-ul-'Aloum, vol. 5, pp. 512 – 515)
by Mrs. Shermeen Butt, UK)

The first need for angels is that there is a similarity between physical and spiritual systems. Spiritual affairs are assumed to be physical because both these orders run alike with the exception of where it is essential for them not to run parallel. We observe that there is an extensive range of causes in physical affairs so much so that the sequence of causes continues latently and solid matter changes into extremely fine gases, and then goes on to convert into energy. It is the final sources of these energies that we name as angels.

The physical order is based on a system where matter becomes finer and finer still, until it is not at all visible and there remains no means to experience it visually. The process is the same with the spiritual order, and angels are the final link in this order. It is a mistake to say that only the physical order has causes; in fact there is a very long chain of causes for every single thing. Therefore, when nothing occurs in the material world without the system of cause and effect, then why should spiritual systems be any different? Why should cause and effect not apply to them?

When a physical system operates it is essential that it also runs parallel on a spiritual level, and angels are the final link in the spiritual system of cause and effect. Thus angels are needed for spirituality.

Secondly, we find that everything goes through evolutionary processes. From the general understanding of evolution, scientists have concluded that the modern human species did not originate in its current form. It began life as an insect-like organism which developed and grew, eventually reaching its current form. This account of the evolution of man appears incorrect and can be invalidated in many ways. However, there is no doubt that reflecting on this concept definitely proves that change within mutually different conditions either requires various stages or is dependent on agencies. Instant mutation to completely different conditions is simply not possible. On the one hand is man's inherent desire to attain higher and higher advancement and his strong aspiration for union with God the Exalted, and on the other hand his existing opacity is an impediment in him meeting God. We conclude from both these matters that an agency is needed in between man and God the Exalted, which is a created being as well as a devout and purely spiritual entity. This agency is called angels!



It is said that a man climbed a high minaret but could not come down. Someone attached a reel of fine thread to an arrow and threw it towards him, and he caught it. He then dangled the fine thread downwards and the person below attached a thick thread to the fine thread which the man pulled upwards. Then, a thicker thread was attached to a rope and so on until a chain was formed and the man could come down with its help.

This is how man's connection with God progresses through the angels. They are the intermediary link through which man can absorb the beneficence of the final link. Thus, the existence of angels is necessary to forge a connection with God.

The third need for angels appears to be that as we see that in the apparent world the physical order has two classifications. One works for man without his knowledge and his involvement. As Allah the Exalted states:

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ
وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ
بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

'And He has pressed into service for you the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; and the stars too have been pressed into service by His command...' (16:13)

The Arabic word **مُسَخَّر** connotes something on which no work is done and yet it gives service. Allah the Exalted states that He has pressed into service night and day, the sun and the moon and the stars and you do not have to work for it. Night falls and day dawns but you do not have to endeavour for it and it is at no cost to you. Similarly, the sun gives off sunshine and the moon gives light and the stars cast varied effects but you do not have to do anything for it.



The arrangement that Allah the Exalted has indicated to in the verse is proof that He has ordained a system for our benefit which works on its own accord and we have no involvement in it. For example, the rays of the sun have the potency that if water is put in different colored bottles and placed in sunshine, it will acquire properties which can heal many ailments.

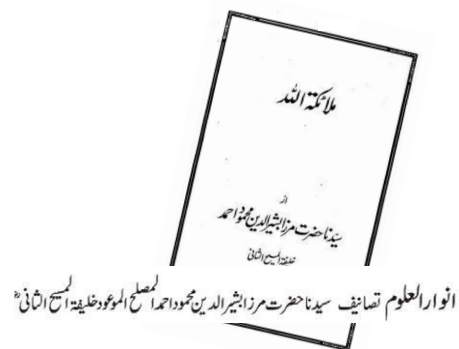
Thus, the sun and the moon and the stars all have their influence. It has now been found out that sunlight kills off the mycobacteria of Tuberculosis, therefore sunlight is used in its healing process. Keeping this in view, ponder how the sun is serving humanity here. Imagine a person comes in contact with a Tuberculosis patient, and it is possible that he gets infected with the bacteria which would of course prove fatal for him. However, when he is in intense sunlight, the bacteria die off. Of course all the while the person would be unaware of being saved in this way. This indeed is an illustration of the system which is working for man's benefit without any effort on his part.

The other system is whereby man makes an attempt and puts in effort to avail of something and makes it advantageous for himself; for example, making bread from grain, building houses with mud, using iron and wood to make cars, carriages and railways, and seeking knowledge. It is worth reflecting that while there should be these two classifications for the physical order and arrangement, would God not have facilitated anything for spirituality?!



Similarly many vegetables grow and ripen in moonlight. I have personal experience regarding Armenian cucumber growing so swiftly in moonlight that the rustling of its growth can be heard. There is other vegetation which is also greatly affected by the moonlight. These were just a couple of examples. These things affect in thousands of ways which are known to us, and who knows how many are the ones which are unknown to us?

Here, the correspondence between the physical and spiritual systems raises the question that just as the sun, moon and stars are spontaneously effecting and benefitting the physical arrangements of mankind, there should also be a similar spiritual system to benefit man's spirituality. God Almighty has appointed angels for this purpose and they generate spirituality in man and go on to safeguard it. Of course, in case of worsening illness, just as sunlight on its own would not be sufficient to kill off Tuberculosis bacteria and medicine would be required, similarly when spiritual ailment worsens, it too needs further means.



UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF ANGELS IN ISLAM

Observations of the Promised Messiah(as), Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL. B.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1835-1908), scholastically discussed the nature and functions of angels in his writings to convince readers of their reality and existence. He also had personal experiences of interacting with angels, and his articulations make it easy to have firm belief in one of the essential articles of faith of Islam. He wrote detailed academic passages about angels in several of his books, such as "Fathe Islam" (1890), "Taudih-e-Maram" (1891), "A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam" (1893), and "Nasim-e-Da'wat" (1903).

At the same time, on numerous occasions he had personal contact with angels, and wrote down his experiences. He explained that it is not for everyone to see angels, as angels are not physical entities:

"Those who possess insight behold angels with their spiritual eyes in their visions which they experience very often in a state of wakefulness. They talk to the angels and learn many things from them and the angels inform them about past and futures events which turn out to be facts"

(1). His personal experiences, along with all the revelations that he received from God through angel Gabriel are all documented in a book entitled "Tadhkirah."

Resolving many complex issues concerning the existence of angels, he discusses various functions and specific duties assigned to angels by God. He explains what the terms "ascent" and "descent" mean. He clarifies the status of angels as compared with humans. He also elaborates the nature of related entities such as Spirit (*Ruh*), Holy Spirit (*Ruh-ul-Quds*), and the opposing forces called Satan and Iblis. Explaining the nature of angels, he elaborates that Allah the Exalted being the Cause of all causes, invisible and imperceptible, Transcendent and Holy, above and beyond everything, thus employs appropriate agencies called angels for His signs, revelations and manifestations to facilitate spiritual growth of mankind, taking it to perfection.

He says: "God has taught us in the Holy Qur'an that the natural system does not run by itself and that all the particles in the cosmos hear the voice of God (that is, obey His laws), and angels are appointed by Him to carry out certain functions and they do so according to His will" (2).

In "Taudih-e-Maram", he writes:

"All angels do not have the same status and rank and all of them do not perform the same kind of function. Every angel is assigned a different task. Whatever changes take place in the world, and whatever emerges as action out of latent power, and whatever success is achieved by souls and bodies in achieving their goals are all affected by heavenly influences. Sometimes the same angel may influence different types of capacities in different ways"

He says: "It is obvious that the All-Wise One God Who has instituted the external system and has chosen that through the effect of the external means like the heavenly bodies and elements, etc., our physical bodies, our faculties and our senses should be perfected; the same All-Wise and All-Powerful One would have chosen that system for our spiritual perfection; for He is One without associate and there is unity and uniformity in all His wisdom and works. Thus the external means which affect our spirituality and fulfill our spiritual needs, as the sun, the moon and the elements help us with regards to our physical needs, are known by the name of angels"(4). At another place, he further elaborates the same point: "Observation of the laws of nature has established conclusively that certainly those (spiritual) helpers and assistants exist outside of us. We may not be aware of their true reality, but we know for certain that they are neither the Almighty Himself operating directly, nor are they our own faculties and capacities. They are a species of creation which have independent existence"(5).

Thus, the angels are the cause of every change in the external world or within our own minds and bodies. They are the forces behind all physical actions and reactions as well as the causes of the operations of matter and energy.

"God Almighty has called angels regulators (mudabbarat) and distributors (muqassamate amr) and they are the cause of every change and development"(6).

In response to the possible objection that if angels are the regulators and distributors of matters, then why human plans work according to their personal designs, he responds:

“The answer is that our projects and plans are not independent of the medium of angels and their suggestions and revelation. The function that the angels perform by the command of God Almighty, they perform through persons who are naturally inclined towards acceptance of the suggestions of angels...The suggestion and revelation that the angels communicate are according to the nature of the person concerned. The revelation that they communicate to God’s elect, they cannot communicate to others”(7).



While reading the Holy Qur’an, a difficult question may arise: If God Almighty alone is to be worshipped, why then all the angels were asked by God to bow down in prostration before Adam? In response, the Promised Messiah(as) gives the following explanation:

“This commandment to angels to bow down in prostration did not relate to the time when Adam was brought into being; it was a separate command. When a man attains his full stature as a human being and achieves a balance, and the spirit of God Almighty resides in him, only then they (the angels) should bow down in prostration before such a perfect man, that is to say, they should descend upon him with heavenly lights and should call down blessings upon him.

This is an indication of the eternal law which God Almighty puts into force with regards to His elect, that when any person achieves spiritual balance in any age, and the spirit of God Almighty resides in him, that is to say, the person loses his ego and achieves the rank of immortality in God, angels begin to descend upon him in a special manner...This special descent of angels is so perfect and complete that it can be described as prostration. Prostration indicates that angels are not superior to a perfect man (*insan-e-kamil*), but like royal servants, they pay reverence to a perfect man by prostrating themselves before him”(8)

He also throws light on the terms “descent” and “ascent” of angels, saying: “Their coming down as is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an is not like the descending of a man from a higher level to a lower level; nor is their ascending is like the ascending from a lower level to a higher level, inasmuch as the descending of a man involves a change of his position and is achieved by effort and causes fatigue. The angels do not suffer any exhaustion, nor they have to make any effort, nor they are subject to any change” (9). Talking about Angel Gabriel who “descends” with revelations from God, it is explained:

“Though he descends upon every person who is honored with Divine revelation, (it should be remembered that the true nature of descent is by way of influence, and not in any physical sense), the circle of the effect of his descent assumes small or great proportions according to different capacities. The largest circle of his spiritual effects is that which is related to the revelation that was sent to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)”(10).

Many times in his life the Promised Messiah(as) saw angels in his dreams and wakeful visions.

As it is an established fact, testified by the Holy Qur’an and the Bible, that angels do appear in the form of human beings to men and women of God. As such they came to Abraham(as), Lot(as), Mary mother of Jesus(as), and Prophet Muhammad(sa). The Promised Messiah(as) once fasted for six months, and saw angels who asked him why he was enduring so much hardship that he might fall ill!(11). He once saw an angel in a dream in the form of a boy who was sitting on an elevated platform. He was holding a pure loaf of bread in his hand that was very bright, and said to the Promised Messiahas, “This is for you and for the dervishes who are with you” (12). Once he saw an angel in the form of a young boy of eight or ten years old, who eloquently said to him, “God will bestow upon you all that you desire.”(13).

One night he invoked so much blessings on the Holy Prophet(sa) that his heart and soul became fragrant therewith. The same night he saw in his dream many angels in form of men carrying into his home water-skins filled with divine light in the form of water. Explaining the luminous spiritual water, one of them said to him, "These are the blessings which you had sent to Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family." (14).

Angels appeared to him in other forms, sometime revealing to him some terrible events to follow.

He once saw an angel in the form of a terrifying man. In 1893, on April 2nd, he saw in a state of light slumber that he was sitting in a large house in the company of a few friends when a man of a strong build and terrifying appearance – as if blood was dripping from his face came and stood in front of him. The Promised Messiah has narrates: "When I looked up, I felt that he was a strong creation possessing extraordinary characteristics as if he was not a man but was one of the terrifying angels. All hearts were overawed by him. The moment I looked at him he asked me: 'Where is Lekhram?' And then he named another person and asked: 'Where is he?' From this I understood that he had been appointed for chastisement of Lekhram and of the other person whose name has escaped me. But, this I remember well that he was one of those few people concerning whom I had made an announcement" (15).

He also saw angels telling him of future

One of them was about the epidemic of plague that occurred in the Punjab, India. He narrates: "Today, Sunday February 6, 1898, I saw in a dream that God's angels were planting black trees in different parts of the Punjab. Those trees were very ugly, black in color, terrifying and of small size. I asked some of those who were planting them: What kind of trees are these? They answered: These are trees of the plague which is about to spread in the country. It remained unclear to me whether it was said that the plague would spread during the coming winter or the winter after, but it was a terrible sight which I saw" (16). This prophecy was fulfilled, and within a year more than 300,000 persons died of the plague.

***peere-peeraan -
(The spiritual preceptor of
spiritual preceptors)***

Towards the end of his life, in 1908, he saw a vision narrated in these words: "One day I was lying down in the courtyard of my house when in a vision, I experienced a meeting with angels. I saw many angels in my vision, beautiful and richly clad, singing joyously. They came round to me repeatedly and each time extended their hands towards me and recited a verse of a poem, the concluding word was *peere-peeraan* – (The spiritual preceptor of spiritual preceptors). Pointing with their hands towards me when they were opposite to me, they repeated *peere-peeraan*" (17).

Relevant to the subject of angels is the presence of the Holy Spirit, and its antithesis, Satan. The Promised Messiah(as) explains:

"Every light, comfort, satisfaction, blessing, steadfastness, and every spiritual bounty is bestowed upon the elect through the Holy Spirit. As for the disbelievers and the wicked, Satan has been appointed their companion for all time so that he might spread darkness over them every moment and should not leave them alone while they stand and sit and move and rest and sleep and awake. Similarly, for those who are close to God, the Holy Spirit has been appointed as a good companion for all time so that it should constantly rain down light upon them, and should support them every moment and should not depart from them at any time" (18).

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| (1) footnote | A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 5, p. 183, |
| (2) | Nasim-e-Da'wat, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 19, p 462 |
| (3) | Taudih-e-Maram, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 3, p. 85 |
| (4) | A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 5, p. 134 |
| (5) | A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 5, p. 88 |
| (6) | A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 5, p. 137 |
| (7) | A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 5, p. 185 |
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| (10) | Taudih-e-Maram, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol 3, p. 85-86 |
| (11) | Tadhkirah, 2009 English edition, p 29 |
| (12) | Tadhkirah, 2009 English edition, p 23 |
| (13) | Tadhkirah, 2009 English edition, p 578 |
| (14) | Tadhkirah, 2009 English edition, p 97 |
| (15) | Tadhkirah, 2009 English edition, p 301-302 |
| (16) | Tadhkirah, 2009 English edition, p 407-408 |
| (17) | Tadhkirah, 2009 English edition, p 1064-1065 |



My Dear Angel

By Andaleeb Ahmad

My Dear Angel
Come and whisper gently in my ear
The soothing promise of God
Removing all traces of fear.

My Dear Angel
May you show me His love untold
Stand beside me always
Making me feel ever so bold.

My Dear Angel
Guide me to the light
I'm blind by the darkness
Don't know what's wrong or right.

My Dear Angel
Give me comfort, strength and rest
Direct my heart on the path—
The path that only leads to the best.

My Dear Angel
God chose you not to stray
We humans weren't so blessed
To fully obey His commands every day.

My Dear Angel
When life is troublesome and lost of all hope
Just give me some divine direction
Providing me with the strength to cope.

My Dear Angel
You are the keeper of magic and dreams
Our guardians of hope and wonder
Your presence makes my heart gleam.



POETRY CORNER

BOOK REVIEW

Malaikat-ul-Lah

ANGELS OF ALLAH

by Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad.

Reviewed by: Imam Rizwan Khan

The speech Malaikat-ul-Lah was an address delivered at the Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on December 28, 1920 in Qadian, India. The revered speaker, Hadrat Musleh Mau'ood, Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifat-ul-Masih II(ra), was the Promised Son of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah(as). In 1914, at the age of 25, he was elected as *khalifah*, that is, *successor*, to the Promised Messiah(as). For 52 years he led the Community and served the causes for which it was established. He inspired and motivated his followers' spiritual development; he spoke and wrote in defense of Islam; and he established institutions to propagate Islam all over the world.

Hazur(ra) begins by pointing out that although belief in the angels is an extremely important subject, being one of the articles of faith, unfortunately, Muslims have paid little attention to it. Thus, they have failed to profit from its great benefits. Commentators on the Holy Qur'an have also failed to address this subject. After the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet(sa), no one has shed light on this subject like the Promised Messiah(as).

Hazur(ra) then describes that belief in angels is of such fundamental importance that even the most barbaric nations believed in their existence, and contemporary religions have described them clearly. Among previous religions, Zoroastrianism has discussed them in the greatest detail. Then Judaism has made frequent mention of them, referring to them at times as the sons of God. In Hinduism, it is believed that angels are spirits who should be worshipped.

The Reality of Angels

Hazur(ra) gives 14 points describing the reality of angels and removing common misconceptions concerning them.

1. God created the angels; they are not a part of God. 37:151
2. Angels can only be seen with one's spiritual eyes in their true form, they are not physical beings. 6:10
3. Angels have no gender. 37:151
4. There are three categories of angels; those who manifest the attributes of Allah, those who assist the above mentioned angels, and those countless angels assigned to various other tasks. 40:8, 74:32
5. Angels cannot disobey Allah. 66:7
6. Angels complete the tasks assigned to them, unlike man, who at times can become ill and unable to complete his tasks. 66:7

7. Angels cannot be influenced by others as humans can. 66:7
8. The number of angels is unlimited. 74:32
9. Angels have different ranks, some working under the authority of others. 32:12, 6:94, 4:98
10. Angels have limited capacities and only do the task they are assigned; they do not progress as humans do. 2:32-33
11. Angels have a small degree of free will, but they cannot disobey. 66:7, 2:31, 32
12. Angels do not have knowledge of the unseen. 34:42
13. Certain angels are assigned to specific tasks.
14. Angels manifest different attributes of Allah. 35:2

Tasks of Angels

After this, Hazur(ra) describes different tasks that angels have.

1. Bring the revelation of Allah. 22:76
2. Cause people to die. 32:12
3. Bring punishment on those who oppose the prophets(as) of Allah. 6:159
4. Help the believers. 41:31-32
5. Destroy the disbelievers and place awe in their hearts of the prophets(as) and their communities. 3:125, 152
6. Establish the unity of Allah. 3:19
7. Make the truth of prophets(as) apparent. 4:167
8. Glorify Allah. 39:76
9. Seek forgiveness for the believers. 40:8, 42:6
10. Allah is the Cause of all causes, and after Allah, angels are the first cause in the laws of nature. 40:8
11. Pray for blessings to descend on people. 33:57
12. Worship Allah.
13. Keep the record of the deeds of people. 82:11-13
14. Spread love for the beloved ones of Allah in the world.
15. Serve the beloved ones of Allah and are made subordinate to them. 15:29-30
16. Teach people and enlighten their hearts with knowledge.
17. Motivate people with good thoughts to do good deeds.

Hazur(ra) then explains that although humans cannot be of direct benefit to angels, we can pray that their status be raised. Answers to Objections Against the Existence of Angels. After this, Hazur(ra) answers various objections made against the existence of angels.



If angels exist, why can they not be seen?

Answer: There are many things in the world that cannot be seen but we still know that they exist, like taste, sound, and scent. An awareness of things is not always gained through sight. Similarly, there are other things we believe in because of their effects, like our memory, which we have never perceived with our senses but we still believe exists.

Is God dependent on angels?

Answer: Firstly, God created the angels from nothing, and the creator is never dependent on his creation, He existed even before its creation. Secondly, God has made means for everything in the physical and spiritual world. For example, He has made food to fill our stomachs and medicine to cure our illnesses, but can we say that He is dependent on food and medicine for our existence? Just as God is not dependent on the means He Himself has created in the physical world, He is also not dependent on the means He has created in the spiritual world.



We observe causes for everything that takes place and exists in the world, how can we believe that their cause is angels?

Answer: Angels are the last cause of all causes before Allah. The causes for the existence of things in this world that we observe are middle causes that are in the millions, but angels are the cause of all of those causes. For example, we observe that medicine is the cause of an illness being cured, but angels are the cause of that medicine having the effect that it does, they are responsible for the law of nature behind the phenomenon.

Effects that angels and satans have on us

Hazur(ra) describes three stages in our relationship with angels.

1. Man's relationship with angels begins with receiving motivations to do good deeds. Their example is like that of a stranger who gives us directions when we get lost traveling on a path.

2. Then this relationship grows stronger. Their example is like that of a friend traveling with us who we consult when we forget the way. Here, our connection with angels is no longer temporary but permanent, however we only consult them when we need help.

3. Finally, the relationship becomes so strong that man becomes the master and God commands the angel to obey and serve the person. This is the status of prophets.

Then, Hazur(ra) describes three stages in our relationship with satan.

1. A person walking on a straight path is incited by satan to take another path. If the person accepts his command, he goes astray.

2. When a person accepts these incitements repeatedly, this relationship grows stronger and satan becomes his friend. 4:39

3. Finally, the relationship becomes so strong that satan becomes the master and the person becomes the slave.

Here, the question arises; does every person have separate angels assigned to him or her?

Answer: Yes, there are two types of angels, one type of angels is individually with people, and the other consists of those assigned to tasks that affect multiple people at the same time, like Gabriel.

From this, the question arises; if there are certain angels that affect multiple people at the same time, how then do they descend?

Answer: The word *nazool* (descent) does not mean physical descent, for this word is used for Allah as well. The descent of an angel on someone means that an angel has exerted its influence on someone. Each person accepts that influence according to his capacity. In the same way that different objects, like iron, glass, and water, have different capacities to reflect light, similarly, hearts have varying levels of purity, and they accept the influence of angels accordingly.

From this, another question arises; if angels exert influence on man, it seems that angels are superior to man, which means that Gabriel is greater than the Holy Prophet(sa).

Answer: Gabriel exerts influence but only as an intermediary, the real influence is from Allah. An example of this is like a king who sends a message through his servant or mailman. The mailman may not know or understand what the message is; the governor who is receiving the letter from the king is greater than the mailman. However, it should be noted that not every human is greater than every angel. .



Special persons are greater than special angels, and ordinary people are greater than ordinary angels.

The reason for the superiority of humans is that we have free will and can be punished for doing evil, and so our reward for choosing to do good is greater.

How to Tell which Influence on us is Stronger

Hazur(ra) then gives a basic principle by which to tell whether there is more of a satanic or angelic influence on us.

1. If we find that first a good thought comes to mind, then an evil one, then know that our connection to angels is more than satan.
2. If we find that first an evil thought comes to mind followed immediately by a good one, then know that our connection with angels is weak but they have not abandoned us.
3. If we find that an evil urge comes but there is no good urge with it, then we should know that angels have abandoned us and we are completely under the influence of satan.



How Can we Become like Angels?

Hazur(ra) then explains how we can become like angels.

1. By conveying the message of the prophets(as) of God to the world.
2. By spreading the oneness of God.
3. By having forgiveness in our heart and abandoning thinking ill of others.
4. By glorifying and praising Allah.
5. By recitation of the Holy Qur'an.
6. By reading the books of such a person on whom angels descended, namely the Promised Messiah(as).
7. By going to that place where angels have specially descended. That is why going for jumu'ah prayer is very beneficial.
8. By having a connection with the khalifah of the time.

This book is the first of its kind in the history of Islamic literature to expound on the subject of the angels of Allah in such depth; no other book goes into such detail and clarity on the topic. After having read this book, the reader will find himself with a completely new understanding on the significance of one of the most fundamental articles of faith that Islam has made incumbent upon us. This book fills a void in the collective understanding of the Islamic world on this subject. It also enriches the individual with an awareness of not only the existence, but also the presence of angels, an awareness that will enable one to benefit from these beings and gain nearness to Allah Almighty



THE THRONE OF ALLAH AND ANGELS

(Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B)



It is important to understand the connection of angels with Allah's Throne. Allah's Throne is a symbolic expression that indicates His ineffable Sublime, Exalted, Holy, and unreachable station; and all Sovereignty of the universe belongs to Him Alone. His Laws are fully enforced under His domain. He encompasses all of His creation and yet He remains completely distinct from His creations. He is the Originator and Provider of life in all its forms – physical as well as spiritual, but still invisible to all.

In Surah Al-Haaqqah (الْحَاقَّةُ), along with some details about the Day of Judgment, we read:

“On that day shall the great Event come to pass. And the heaven will cleave asunder, and it will be very frail that day. And the angels will be standing on its borders, and above them, on that day eight angels will bear the Throne of thy Lord” (69:16-19). (1)

The question may arise: What signifies that the Throne of the Lord shall be carried by eight angels on the Day of Resurrection, and all other angels shall be standing around it?

To understand this subtle point, we have to know that the angels of Allah the Exalted are His agencies who bear and reflect Allah's attributes, working behind the scenes, and they execute Allah's Will on His command. Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, in his book *A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam*, writes: “God Almighty, Who in His Transcendence and Holiness is above everything, employs appropriate agencies for His signs and manifestations... (These agencies are) a form of creation which on one side are related to God Almighty, and on the other to His creation so that they may obtain grace from one side and communicate it to the others.” (2)

In the Holy Qur'an, two types of attributes of Allah are mentioned: First, *tashbihi* (تشبیهی) or “attributes of similitude” that have some apparent resemblance with human faculties and qualities. And the second, *tanzihi* (تنزیہی) or “transcendent attributes” that are unique to Allah alone and no one shares them to any degree at all, and no one else has any resemblance with Him in having these unique attributes.

In Surah Al-Fatiha, which is the essence of the entire Qur'anic teaching, the four fundamental *tashbihi* or attributes of similitude are mentioned, namely, He is

- (i) the Creator, (ii) the Gracious,
- (iii) the Merciful, and (iv) Master of the Day of Judgment.

Around these four attributes all other Divine *tashbihi* attributes revolve.

In Surah Al-Ikhlâs, Allah's four fundamental *tanzihi* attributes are mentioned; that He is

- (i) One and Alone in His person, (ii) He is Independent and Besought of all, (iii) He begets not, nor is He begotten, and (iv) there is none like unto Him. (3)

Allah's Throne being carried by eight angels and other angels standing around it, therefore, means that it shall be through these eight fundamental attributes of Allah that all of His other attributes shall come into full light. And thus God's Glory shall be manifested completely on the Day of Resurrection when the present order of creation shall be totally consummated.

On that Day, God's Unity and all of His beautiful and superb Divine attributes shall be seen in their complete splendor and brilliance. Eight angels carrying His Throne means that four of His sacred *tashbihi* attributes and four of His awesome *tanzihi* – similitude or transcendent -- attributes shall be fully manifested. All other angels standing on its borders means that all His attributes of *Jamal* and *Jalal* – of Beauty and of Majesty -- shall be manifested in their full glory to us in the Hereafter.

The angels standing around the Throne of Allah also signifies that to bring the Day of Judgment the agency of angels shall play a tremendously significant role. The Holy Qur'an describes: (4)

“The day when the trumpet will be blown; and you will come horde after horde; and the heaven shall be opened and shall become all portals; and the mountains shall be moved and shall become as if they were a mirage. Surely, Hell lies in ambush, a home for the rebellious; they will tarry therein for ages” (78:19-24).

At other places in the Qur'an it is further elaborated that the blowing of the trumpet on the Day of Judgment shall be done by the angel called Israfil. Similarly, all material things are moved through the agencies of various angels. The records of good and evil are kept by the angels.

Describing further the incredible events of tremendous import, the Lord of the Throne says:

“When the earth is shaken with her violent shaking, and the earth throws up her burdens, and man says, ‘What is the matter with her?’ On that day will she tell her news; it will be because your Lord would have revealed to her. On that Day will men issue forth in scattered groups that they may be shown the results of their works. Then whoso does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoso does an atom's weight of evil will also see it” (99: 2-9). (5)

Again, all these events are carried out through the actions of the angels who work under direct command of the Lord. Thus, their standing around the Throne of the Lord on the Day of Judgment clearly signifies that all matters will be fully manifested to humans, and angels would have played a momentous role under Divine authority; and once the Judgment is completed, the angels carrying the Throne and standing around it shall continue to perform various duties in Paradise and in Hell – and all shall remain under complete authority of Allah -- the Lord of the Throne, reflecting all of His attributes.

ANGELS AND MYSTICAL ORDERS

By: Aasim Ahmad

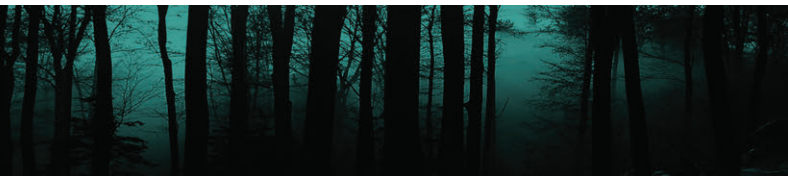
“He sends down the angels with revelation by His command on whomsoever of His servants He pleases saying, ‘Warn people that there is no God but I, so take Me alone for your Protector.’”

Chapter 16, Al-Nahl, Verse 3 of the Holy Qur’an encapsulates one of the key attributes of angels. Angels bring revelation or the word of God from the heavens down to the earth and admonish men to believe in the one God. Islam certainly acknowledges angels as belief in them is one of the primary articles of faith. The Qur’an consistently refers to angels not only as those beings who bring down revelation from on high, but as agents in the world protecting and defending Allah’s messengers and their followers (13:12), maintaining all the workings of the universe (66:7, 37:165, 51:5), and causing death (16:29-33). The Qur’an contains a plethora of references to angels and their many functions, but understanding beliefs in angels requires a review of mystic literature as the mysticism of all religions focus on metaphysical phenomena.

Mysticism generally can be understood as the relations of personal experiences with the Divine. Concerning angels, such experiences would include the Prophet Muhammad’s(sa) many conversations with the archangel Gabriel wherein the Qur’an was revealed. Two mystical traditions have been widely recognized in the West: the Jewish Kabbalah and Islamic Sufism. Both traditions share a strong philosophical and artistic component to their spiritual understanding. The Kabbalah is rooted in the text of the Torah and Zohar and Sufism extrapolates its beliefs through unique interpretations of the Qur’an.

The Kabbalah Perspective

The Kabbalah, according to Rabbi Tzvi Freeman, is defined as something that is received. Kabbalah is not something that can be known through education alone, but something understood and felt. It is an experience – a special wisdom. In Freeman’s words, it is an “inner knowledge that has been passed down from sage to student from the earliest of times.” The Kabbalah is described as the teachings related from Adam(as) down to Abraham(as). The sage and student relationship is foundational, with a spiritual twist to it. The sage shares his understanding of spiritual enlightenment, or received knowledge, with the student. Jewish mysticism looks mainly to the Zohar, which is the central text of the Kabbalah (received traditions/commentaries of the Torah), for inspiration. There are many discussions of angels within this text and some commentaries provide considerable detail.



In Jewish mysticism, the belief in angels at first glance seems chaotic and imbalanced. In order to reach some form of clarity, one needs to begin with a basic understanding and gradually delve into deeper meanings. To start off, the Hebrew word for angel is “malach.” This word also means messenger. Thus, the core understanding of angels in Judaism is as messengers of God.

Angels not only bring down the message of God, but they bring man’s prayers back up as well. Therefore, angels serve as messengers for God as well as man. It is believed that angels take a man’s prayers, fix any and all errors within them, perfect them, translate them from any other tongue to the Hebrew tongue and subsequently present the prayer before God. Angels are not believed to have any physical or material aspect of existence. In fact, angelic descriptions such as wings or arms of some kind are understood as symbolic representations of an angel’s purpose or task.

According to Rabbi Baruch S. Davidson, angels are tasked with specific purposes or assignments. Each angel, like Gabriel, Rafael, and Michael, are understood to have specific duties and responsibilities. Rafael, for example, is believed to be a healer.

Rabbi Davidson goes on to explain how it is believed that some angels have only one specific task, and upon completion of the task, they are disbanded and no longer exist. In other words, upon completion of their purpose, angels cease to exist. Maimonides, the famous 12th century Jewish philosopher, listed out ten different ranks of angels where each rank is determined by an angel’s understanding of God; the higher the rank, the better understanding of God an angel has. It would appear that the lower ranked angels are tasked with simpler purposes.

Some angelic duties described by Rabbi Davidson include healing, conveying prayers to God, delivering punishment/judgement, and delivering blessings (God’s kindness). In addition to these types of angels, there are also angels created as a result of the deeds of men. For example, Rabbi Davidson explains how a single act of goodness creates one “angel-advocate” and a single act of sin creates one “angel-accuser.” Such angels will either advocate for or oppose a person in heaven. The nature of these angels, according to Rabbi Lazer Gurkow, is determined by the level of prayer. Thus, the more devoted and sincere a prayer is, the stronger and more vibrant the angel that is created becomes.

Angels, in Jewish Kabbalah are not thought of as highly as might be expected. Angels are clearly considered second to man and are a lesser creation of God. Rabbi Davidson explains that man's soul is considered a "piece" of the creator whereas angels are creations. This distinction manifests itself in the simple fact that angels are considered one-dimensional. This means that angels can only serve God in defined ways. On the other hand, man can serve God in a number of ways. Furthermore, the fact that man has the choice to serve God makes him superior to the angel who has no choice but to serve. This distinction goes one step further as man's freedom allows him to reach higher degrees of spirituality, whereas the angel is confined to its defined capacity.

There is a strong connection in Jewish belief between prayer and angels. As noted earlier, angels refine and present prayers to God. This connection is rooted in the story of Jacob's ladder. This story (noted in Genesis 28:12) refers to a dream Prophet Jacob had wherein he saw a ladder between earth and heaven with angels ascending and descending from it. The Zohar explains, according to Rabbi Heschel Greenberg, that the ladder signifies prayer and man can elevate himself by means of the ladder. It has also been noted that there are 4 "rungs" to this ladder or 4 stages of prayer:

- 1) P'sukei D'zimra ("Verses of Praise");
- 2) The blessings that precede the Shema (the Jewish prayer exclaiming God's Oneness);
- 3) The Shema; and
- 4) The Amidah -- the "standing" prayer, also known as Shemonah Esrei ("eighteen") because of its original eighteen blessings.

The first rung or stage of prayer relates to praising God, the second and third stage relate the excitement of angels about God and overall love of God respectively, and the final stage is the Amidah or being in complete unison with God. The blessings before the Shema discuss the angels and their excitement in relation to God. This excitement exhibited by the angels serves as encouragement for man to also be excited about God. This excitement leads to the actual recitation of the Shema prayer. The angels, in this process play an exemplary role. As the human makes a choice, he learns from the totally submissive nature of the angels and endeavors to be as "excited" about God as the angels. Ultimately, through this entire experience, the person will reach the final stage of prayer, or the Amidah, which is a stage of complete unison with God.

Angels in Jewish mysticism are understood essentially as subservient beings created by God to serve specific purposes. In some cases, angels are created out of man's prayers and deliver those prayers to God and there are also angels like Gabriel and Rafael who have specific duties to perform in the universe. There is a clear distinction between men and angels and it is not the usual difference between choice and compulsion. Angels are understood, like all other things, as creations of God, whereas man is understood to be a piece of the creator itself. Kabbalah mysticism clearly defines the roles of angels and their position in the spiritual order.

The Sufi Perspective

Sufism is described as a mystical and philosophical interpretation of Islam. It is meant to "elevate" one to the realization of the true Divine nature of things. Sufism is often called the "way of the heart" or the "way of the pure." There is an importance of knowing oneself in Sufism as this is the way one comes to know God. Angels play an important role in Sufi belief as they are generally understood as the most perfect and closest to God. Angels are a perfect model that man must follow in order to reach closer to God and the Divine. However, man's ability to have a choice surpasses the status of angels.



According to Sheikh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, Sufi theology understands angels to be created out of light to serve God's will without question. Angels are able to move about the universe willfully and can take on the form of any creation they require to complete their duties. Sheikh Kabbani explains that angels can take the form of not only animals and humans, but also of rainbows and any other material creation of God.

As opposed to the Jewish mystical perspective, the Sufi perspective has great reverence and respect for angels. Sheikh Kabbani discusses how angels have been placed as guardians over man and, since guardians are "more perfect" than the one who is guarded, angels are more perfect creations than humans. This superiority extends into a number of characteristics. For example, angels worship God more perfectly, are more pious, and are smarter/more intelligent than man. As explained by Sheikh Kabbani, angels live in paradise/the seven heavens and have been worshipping God long before man as the angels were created before man.

As a result of having been created before man, angels have been bestowed with "greater and more powerful faculties." Angels cannot fall into error and are continuously praising and worshipping God, which makes them more pure than man.

Concerning intelligence, Sheikh Kabbani details how angels have two kinds of intelligences: intellectual and traditional knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is knowledge of the earth, God and His attributes, other angels, and creation/inhabitants of the earth. Traditional knowledge is described as knowledge of the unseen or knowledge that cannot be known by man without revelation. As angels bring revelation down from God, Sheikh Kabbani believes angels to have this knowledge in greater abundance than man. Angels, in fact, are understood to be far more intelligent than man.



Due to their closeness to God, the knowledge of angels is considered perfect, active, and continuous. In fact, Sheikh Kabbani goes as far as describing angels as the only created beings with the attribute of perfection.

Sheikh Kabbani goes on to list six attributes of angels. Angels are messengers of God, noble, pure in obedience to God, firmly established in divine presence, obeyed by the physical/earthly world, and are the guardians of revelation. These perfect attributes are the reason man must make himself first like angels in order to establish a close relationship with God. In fact, Sheikh Kabbani has written that God first requires man to "enter the throng of angels" before entering paradise. In order to achieve closeness to God, one must first become closer to the angelic presence.

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After describing what angels are, Sheikh Kabbani pursues a discussion of specific angels and their roles as spelled out in Islamic tradition and the Holy Qur'an. Sheikh Kabbani lists out the four archangels and their duties. The first is the angel Gabriel who is in charge of revelation and is the leader of soldier-angels. Soldier-angels are angels sent to protect believers as was done during the Battle of Badr. Gabriel is also in charge of victory and the extinction of any physical creation God wills including nations of men, animals, and vegetation. Michael is the second archangel in charge of maintaining, nurturing, and sustaining mankind through such things as rain and vegetation. Azra'il is in charge of death and the seizure of the souls of the dead. Israfil is the final archangel and is in charge of the last or judgment day. Israfil will be the blower of the trumpet described in the Qur'an to be the mark of the last day.

One of the interesting stories related by Sheikh Kabbani is the story of the Prophet's journey to Paradise. In this story, the angel Gabriel accompanies the Prophetsa to a number of spiritual locations including the place where Prophet Jesus(as) was born, where Prophet Moses(as) spoke to God (Mt. Sinai), and the Temple of Solomon(as). At the Temple of Solomon(as), the Prophet(sa) encountered all past prophets(as) where he led a prayer. Through out this story, there is another mystical creature called Buraq, upon which Gabriel and the Prophet(sa) ride to each destination. It is said in this story that all righteous persons will ride these spiritual beasts into Paradise on the last day. The Buraq travels as fast as it can see and has a crown on its head with the *kalimah* inscribed on it. Throughout this story, angels of all different types, appearances, and abilities appear before the Prophet(sa). Some angels are described as having eyes like moons, speaking in different languages, and many are in a constant state of worship. This story is not cited by Sheikh Kabbani in any way, but it is a fascinating story illustrating in exquisite detail the journey of the Prophet(sa) through heaven.

There are clear differences between the belief in angels in the Kabbalah and Sufism. The Kabbalah indicates a clear superiority of man over angels with angels described as servants more so than a noble and esteemed creation. On the other hand, Sufism expresses a strong reverence for angels as a model or goal for man due to the natural closeness between God and angels. Whereas Sufism indicates both man and angels are creations of God, the Kabbalah describes man as a literal piece or part of the Creator and angels as a creation. The angel overall, is an idea that has always been a part of the history of religion in some form or another. As the messengers of Allah who deliver revelation from on high, angels must have always been in contact with prophets since time immemorial. The history of religion is, in fact, this history of the interaction between man and angels.



THE ART OF SPIRITUALITY

When Imagery Invites Idolatry

By, Naser-ud-Din Shams

The consummate religion is as much a science as it is an art. Its science frames a system of legal, social and political governance that provides structure to everyday life. Its art flourishes into a world of rich imagery that nourishes spiritual life and poetic expression. The human mind requires both paths to satisfy its search for truth. This truth forms the foundation of human expression: paintings, poems and sculptures, as well as political, scientific and intellectual theories.

Only the Architect of human intellect could author a book that could fully satisfy both requirements of the human mind. The two complementary pursuits balance one another, and provide a holistic understanding of truth. However, if a believer focuses too much on the scientific letter of the law, s/he runs the risk of losing the spirit behind the law. On the other hand, if a believer overemphasizes the artistic imagery, s/he runs the risk of going astray from the true path and even trespassing into the forbidden territory of idolatry.

If the Holy Qur'an were truly a perfect book, it would need to optimize spiritual growth through powerful imagery, while protecting against the pitfalls of idolatry through a solid system of science. These fundamental concepts are important to understanding how angels have been depicted in art, as well as other fundamental religious themes.

Distinguishing Literal from Metaphor

The Holy Qur'an states that it contains two types of verses: "...there are verses that are firm and decisive in meaning [*muhkamaat*] – they are the basis of the Book [*umm-ul-Kitaab*] – and there are others that are susceptible to different interpretations [*mutashaabihaat*]...And none knows its right interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; the whole is from our Lord.' – And none take heed except those gifted in knowledge" [3:8].

Here the Holy Qur'an points out that some of its verses are literal in meaning, the *muhkamaat*, and they are the basis for the Islamic legal and moral code, or the *shari'ah*. There is no ambiguity in these verses and they are not subject to interpretation. They are also called *umm-ul-Kitaab* which literally means the "mother of the Book" because they give birth to understanding the second type of verses which are termed *mutashaabihaat*, or those subject to interpretation. One must understand the clear verses before delving into the allegorical. Understanding the Qur'an is as much a science as it is an art.

The clear verses of the Holy Qur'an are foundational and provide an anchor that tethers the allegorical verses from drifting too far. Qur'anic exegesis demands that both verses harmonize with one another and forbids the allegorical verses from contradicting the *muhkamaat*. Most importantly, the Qur'an cautions Muslims against ignorance lest it be a source of discord and error. Only men and women gifted with knowledge and righteousness can unearth the deeply buried treasures of the Qur'an.

Linguistic Word Analysis:

Similar to the two types of Qur'anic verses, every word has two types of meanings: 1) Literal [Arabic: *Haqiqi*] and 2) Figurative [Arabic: *Majazi*]. Simply put, literal meanings are physical in nature and figurative meanings are spiritual. For example, the Holy Qur'an states that, similar to angels, the Holy Prophet(sa) and the believers have "wings" (15:89, 17:25, and 26:216). Obviously people do not have literal wings, so there must be a metaphoric interpretation behind this word. Allah uses imagery here to express that if Muslims serve others out of sincere love, humility and mercy, their hands metaphorically become wings that elevate them into the heights of spirituality.

The literal is the obvious actual meaning and the figurative meaning is based upon a connotation of the word understood in its proper context. Figurative expressions manifest in metaphors, parables and personifications. These figurative expressions are required to help us comprehend spiritual concepts (such as Deity, Paradise and angels) that cannot be completely understood physically.

Judeo-Christian Depictions of Angels

The term used in the Old Testament for angel is cherub (Hebrew: *ke-roov*, pl. *ke-roov-im*). These are spiritual beings which are described in various ways in the visions of the Israelite prophets(as).

A synagogue discovered in Dura Europos, an archeological site that flourished in Syria circa 300BC, unearthed wall paintings of Jewish artistic depictions. The following painting includes cherubim and most likely depicts the visions in Ezekiel (37:1-10) where the "Hand of God" was upon Ezekiel(as) and a prophecy is made of raising the dead to life and transforming them into a mighty army (metaphorically representing Israel):



In Ezekiel 10:14, the cherubim take peculiar forms that include parts of men, oxen, lions and eagles. These animates symbolized power and wisdom in Jewish tradition, and in later Christian mysticism, came to represent the four Evangelists of the New Testament.

This imagery is depicted in folio 27v of the "Book of Kells," a beautifully decorated Latin manuscript of the four Gospels compiled circa 800AD by Celtic monks. Starting from the top right and going counter-clockwise, the winged lion represents Mark, the winged man represents Matthew, the winged ox symbolizes John, and the eagle represents Luke:

Christians continued to depict angels with wings, but over time, painted them as children and females, most likely as symbols of innocence and purity. The following painting by Artist Bartolomé Esteban Perez Murillo is a Christian depiction (circa 1680AD) of the baptism of Jesus(as):



This painting illustrates where art trespasses into the realm of idolatry. God the Father is painted as a being confined to time and space, albeit suspended in the Heavens surrounded by angels. Although Christians do not see this as a serious issue, trapping the Infinite and Holy God into the shape of an old man is an exponentially far greater affront than describing one us humans as a filthy rat slurping around in a sewer. And even that is an understatement!

Emotional appeals aside, the facts are even stronger. Who has ever seen God to describe Him as such? Does He really have 2 eyes? If so, can they see what's going on behind Him? If not, then how can He be All-Seeing? On the other hand, if those two eyes can see what's happening behind Him, doesn't that make them redundant?

The Holy Qur'an strictly condemns such fallacies as they give illegitimate birth to idolatry, error and vice. When addressing the pagan Arab depictions of angels, which equally apply to Christians, God states in the Qur'an: "Did we create the angels females while they were witnesses? Now, surely it is one of their fabrications that they say, 'Allah has begotten children; and they are certainly liars'" (37:151-153).

Here the Holy Qur'an points out that those who lie about angels, eventually lie about God. The two are connected and are characteristic slanders of idolaters.

Hindu Evolution

A similar evolution appears to have taken shape in Hinduism. We see figurative expressions depicted in art, which over centuries came to be accepted as literal reality by the illiterate masses. One example of this evolution can be seen in the Deity Itself, where an artist portrayed God's role of *Vighnaraja* or the *Lord of Obstacles* as Ganesh, who has an elephant head, a round belly and typically four to 16 arms.

These images may have been the artist's depiction of God's ability to remove and create obstacles effortlessly with the strength of a mighty elephant, the self-sufficiency of one whose stomach never hungers, and hands endowed with multi-dimensional capabilities. Obviously, once Hindus bow to the artistic image as a literal reality, rather than the Invisible God behind the image, they enter the realm of idolatry.



The Promised Messiah(as), Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, fulfilled the Latter Day spiritual manifestation of His Holiness Krishna(as).

In fulfilling this prophetic role, Ahmad's mission was to bring the Hindu nation back to the Unity of God and the true teachings of Sanatam Dharma, the Eternal or True Path, which Muslims recognize as *Siraat-ul-Mustaqeem* – the Straight Path [that leads to the Eternal God].

Another area where figurative expression may have evolved into a literal belief involves reincarnation. The Judeo-Christian and Muslim scriptures describe those who are animal like, or underdeveloped in their spirituality, as snakes (deceptive), monkeys (empty mimickers), swine (filthy) etc. Man goes through endless cycles to spiritually grow out of this animal state (*An-Nafs-ul-Am-marah*) and into the state of man (*An-Nafs-ul-Lawwaamah*), until he finally breaks free of all worldly attachment and achieves the lofty realm of angels (*An-Nafs-ul-Muttaqqinah*).

This last state is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (89:28), where man achieves a "nirvana" like enlightenment and his soul achieves Islam, a peaceful state of complete surrender to the Will of Allah. The prophets attain this rank as do those in complete obedience to them. Allah describes the prophets as "honored servants" who "speak not before He speaks, and they act only by His command" (21:27-28) similar to angels who completely obey the Will of Allah. It is at this point that Allah chooses men, who are like angels, to be His messengers:

"Allah chooses His messengers from among angels, and from among men. Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing" (22:76).

This spiritual imagery, over several centuries, could have been misconstrued by the illiterate masses as a physical reincarnation. Whereas animals were used to describe underdeveloped souls in a strictly spiritual sense, the belief may have evolved that those sinners would literally reappear in this world as animals, incessantly locked into these cycles until enlightenment could set them free.

Angels in the Qur'an & Ah-Hadith

In the Holy Qur'an, we are told that angels have wings in numbers of two, three and four (35:2). These "wings" represent the varying degrees of powers and capabilities vested within the angels to accomplish their tasks. In fact, some hadith reports state that Gabriel was manifested with 600 wings [Sahih Bukhari, Book of Commentary and Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith].

The following illustration from the 1595 edition of the Turkish "Life of Muhammad" (*Siyer-e-Nabi*), depicts the four angels, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and 'Azraeel accompanying the Prophet(as) as he travels with his companions(ra).



Angels are spiritual beings but manifest in various ways physically when perceived by humans. In contrast to Jesus' perception of the Holy Spirit as a dove, Gabriel manifested itself to Muhammad in such a glorious manner that its wing covered the entire expanse of the sky. On another occasion Gabriel took the form of a man who asked several questions in the presence of the Muslim congregation and was physically seen by all present. Afterwards, when told the man was Gabriel, some Muslims went in search of the man, but could not find any trace of him.

Such manifestations galvanized the faith of believers to the extent they sacrificed their lives in hordes on the battlefield. They could not have done this had they entertained any doubts.

Other references in the ah-hadith point out visions of ferocious beings that intimidated even the worst of the Holy Prophet's enemies including Amr bin Hishaam (i.e., Abu Jahl). Once, Abu Jahl was on his way to trample upon the neck of the Holy Prophet(sa) while he(sa) was prostrating in prayer. Suddenly, Abu Jahl frantically began shielding himself with his arms and started falling back in retreat. The people who were expecting to see Abu Jahl humiliate the Holy Prophetsa, asked him what he was doing. He replied, "There is between me and him a trench of flames, terror and wings."

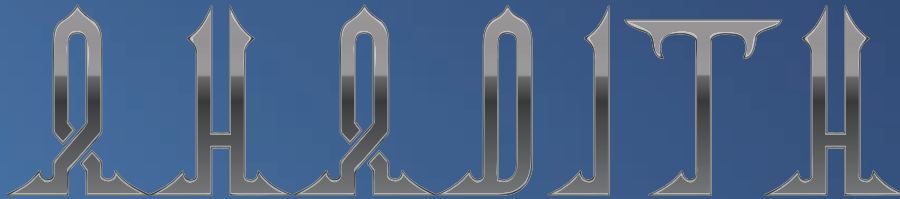
Afterwards, the Holy Prophet(sa) said,

"If he had come near me, the angels would have torn him into pieces" [Sahih Muslim, Book of the Day of Judgment, Hell and Paradise].

Conclusion

Although Islam uses rich spiritual imagery, it takes serious precaution against the risk of idolatry. It does this by rooting all figurative interpretations to the clear verses of the Holy Qur'an. Any interpretations that contradict a fundamental teaching of Islam are immediately discarded and dismissed. While we see other religions that share Islam's belief in the Unity of God and His angels, their artwork eventually became a source of idolatry and error. Since the inception of Islam, the Holy Qur'an has stood guard over its own verses by ensuring that its artistic imagery is balanced by a strong foundation of science, integrity and common sense. And in the end, all praise belongs to Allah.

SAYINGS OF THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD(sa)



"When the deceased is buried (or he said: when one of you is buried), there come to him two blue-black angels, one of whom is called Munkar and the other Nakeer..."

"The Messenger of Allah said, describing Jibreel: 'I saw Jibreel descending from heaven, and his great size filled the space between heaven and earth.'"

"The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from smokeless fire, and Adam was created from that which has been described to you."



FUNCTIONS OF THE ARCHANGELS

(Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Izrael)

By: Irtaza Khalid

Angels have Wings, Two, Three, and Four

"All praise belongs to Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, Who employs the angels as messengers, having wings, two, three, and four. He adds to His creation whatever He pleases; for Allah has power over all things."

These verses from the Holy Qur'an outline the attributes of the angels. Angels are entrusted with the control, management, and supervision of the affairs of the physical world. This is one of their several duties. Another more crucial responsibility of these beings is to carry Allah's messages to His chosen messengers. "Wings" in this verse refer to Divine attributes. Hence, different angels have varying degrees of power and attributes in accordance to the work assigned to them and some angels are therefore endowed with powers greater than others.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines archangel to be "an angel of the highest rank." The word archangel is derived from the Greek ἀρχάγγελος which can literally be translated into "chief angel." In contrast, the Greek root for angel, ἄγγελος, is literally translated as the "messenger." The differences between an angel and an archangel are rank and role. As Phillips explains, when most people talk about angels, the most common image in their mind is one of a rosy-cheeked, winged cherub. However, angels can take many different forms and shapes in different world religions. The Buddhist *Devas*, Muslim *Malaikah*, or Hindu *Apsaras* are all different forms of angels in various religions. The hierarchy of angels can be found in the angelology of different religious traditions. In Islam, the four archangels are Gabriel (or Jibraa'il), Michael (or Mika'il), Raphael (Israfil), and Izrael ('Izra'il), with their respective duties.

Gabriel

Gabriel, the chief of all angels, is the angel of revelation. Gabriel is widely known as the angel who has communicated with all prophets(as) of Allah since the dawn of time. He is the archangel who revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad(sa). Gabriel is also believed to be the bearer of Allah's blessings during the night of *Laylat-ul-Qadr* (The Night of Power) during the Islamic month of Ramadan. All angels have been endowed with the capacity to take on different forms. Gabriel is no exception in that he has presented himself to various prophets in different forms. One famous example of such an occurrence is when he appeared in front of Maryam (Virgin Mary) in human form to give her the glad tidings of the birth of her son(as).

And [Mary] screened herself off from them [her people]. Then We sent Our angel to her and he appeared to her in the form of a well-proportioned man."

In Islamic history, Gabriel has been a constant helper and companion to the Prophet Muhammad(sa). Perhaps the most widely known interaction between the Prophetsa and this angel occurred in the cave of Hira, where Gabriel brought down the first revelation to the Muhammadsa. On a Monday during the month of Ramadan, Muhammadsa was praying in the cave, when Gabriel appeared before him and brought the first revelation:

"Proclaim thou in the name of thy Lord Who created. Created man from a clot of blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous; Who taught by the pen, Taught man what he knew not."

Archangels Gabriel and Michael also helped purify Muhammad's (sa) heart in preparation for his spiritual ascension to heaven during the journey of Mi'raj. Gabriel was the angel who guided Muhammadsa through the numerous levels of the journey until they reached the throne of Allah.

During Muhammad's visit to the town of Ta'if, the leaders of the town left him to be dealt with street goons. People hurled stones at Muhammad(sa) and his companion, Zaidra) and they both were bleeding as they left Ta'if. At this point, while Muhammad(sa) and Zaid(ra) were recuperating for their journey back to Mecca, Gabriel approached the Prophet(sa) and offered to destroy the town and people of Ta'if, thus offering his servitude to the Prophet(sa) of Allah. However, Muhammad(sa) prayed for forgiveness for the people of Ta'if.

Michael

Michael (Mika'il) is an archangel in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic teachings. His name is considered as being a combination of Mika and Il, who is like God (Jew. Enc. & Bukhari) i.e. there is none like God. The Jews looked upon Michael as their favorite angel and as the angel of peace and plenty, rain and herbage (Kath'ir) and Michael is considered chiefly with the work of sustaining the world. He provides nourishment for the body and soul. According to some traditions, he is also responsible for rewards doled out to good people in this life. In some Islamic traditions, archangels Gabriel and Michael were the first angels to obey Allah's order to worship Adam. Michael is given the highest regard in all angels, after Gabriel.

"Whoever is an enemy to Allah, and His angels, and His messengers, and Gabriel, and Michael, then, surely, Allah is an enemy to such believers."

According to Hannah, Michael is the "protector of the people of God and opponents of Satan." Hannah explains that Michael is the guardian angel of the people of God, the Church.

In Islam, there are similar yet slightly different perspectives about Michael in the Sunni, Shi'ite, and the Ahmadiyya sects. According to the beliefs of some Sunni Muslims, Michael was sent down in the physical world to bring a handful of earth so that Allah could create His beings from that dirt, some of whom will obey Him and others who will not. In the Shi'ite faith, Michael is thought to possess messiah-like properties and will work in collaboration with the Mahdi. Ahmadiyya Muslims believe in Michael as an angel of God created with the sole purpose of carrying out Allah's commands, which include providing rain and food to the beings on earth. They (angels) are spiritual beings with no permanent physical form associated with them.

Raphael

According to the Hadith, Israfil is the archangel responsible for signaling the advent of the Judgment Day by blowing the trumpet and sending out a blast of truth from the Holy Rock in Jerusalem. The trumpet is constantly poised at his lips, ready to be blown when Allah so orders. In Judeo-Christian biblical literature, Raphael is his counterpart.

The name "Israfil" is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an but an unnamed angel responsible with the task of blowing the trumpet has been cited several times.

"And the trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth will fall down in a swoon, except those whom Allah will be pleased to spare. Then will it be blown a second time, and lo! they will be standing, awaiting judgment."

According to one interpretation by Farid, this verse seems to apply to the Resurrection in the next life (according to Islamic beliefs), and the role that Israfil plays. Farid argues that it can also be applied to the spiritual conditions of the people immediately before the appearance of a divine teacher in the world whose advent is here likened to the blowing of the trumpet. Hence it may be interpreted that Israfil may have some role in the advent of a new divine teacher.

In the Qur'an, God reveals to Muhammad(sa) that the first trumpet blow will destroy everything:

"So that when a single blast is sounded on the trumpet. And the earth and the mountains are heaved up and then are crushed in a single crash."

This verse applies to the Day of Resurrection when Israfil will blow the trumpet and both the righteous and the guilty will stand before God's Great Judgment Seat to render an account for their deeds. Also at another place, it is explained that the

sound of the second trumpet will bring all human beings back to life again:

"And the trumpet shall be blown and lo! from the graves they will hasten on to their Lord."

According to Lewis et al, Israfil is "a beautiful angel who is a master of music, [he] sings praises to God in a thousand different languages, the breath of which is used to inject life into hosts of angels who add to the songs themselves," thus, implying that the angels of God can have multiple attributes.

Izrael

Izrael is the archangel often referred to as the angel of death who is responsible for separating the soul from the body. The Holy Qur'an never uses the word "Izrael" but refers to malak-ul-maut which can literally be translated into "angel of death." According to certain traditions, the process of separation of the soul from the body carried out Izrael can be one of two forms, depending on the spiritual state of the person involved. If the person was a sinful, non-righteous person, the soul is ripped out very painfully. However, if the person was a pious person of faith, the act of separation of his soul from his body is very smooth, like a "drop of water dripping from glass."

The Qur'an states:

"Say, 'The angel of death that has been put in charge of you will cause you to die; then to your Lord will you be brought back.'"

It should be noted here that only Allah has the knowledge about when and where will each person be taken by death, hence, clarifying it without any doubt that the angel of death has no will of his own. This is portrayed by the following verse:

"Verily, with Allah alone is the knowledge of the Hour. And He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."

According to Farid, all angels, despite their rank, constitute an important link in the spiritual chain, and he, who breaks even one link of the spiritual chain or manifests ill-will against any spiritual system, in fact, severs his connection with the whole system. Such a person thus deprives himself of the favors and blessings of Allah which are showered upon His true servants. Such a person, on the contrary, renders himself deserving of the punishment decreed for transgressors. The term "angel" is expanded to various notions of spirits found in many other religious traditions. According to beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, angels are spiritual beings that carry out God's commands and protect and guide human beings. Angels are responsible for controlling and maintaining the laws of nature. Something as basic as a virus and bacteria are governed, organized, and maintained by specific angels, who work in unison with each other to maintain a perfect balance.

As Murata explains, Islamic spirituality can only be envisaged in connection with the angels, who are intertwined with all dimensions of human life as seen by Islam. Therefore, belief in the angels is one of the core principles of Islam.

THE EXISTENCE OF GUARDIAN ANGELS

By- Rabia Salim

In order to understand the nature of angels and their relationship to a Divine plan, I asked Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad(rh) the Caliph of the time, as a seventeen year old in one of his Question and Answer sessions, that if Allah is All Powerful, why does He need angels, to which his answer to me was *Rabbi kulo shain, khaa di mo ka, rabi fa faznaa, wansurnaa, warhamnaa* - O Lord, everything is Thy servant, help me, protect me, have mercy on me.

He explained to me that the angels were created by Him to serve God in all His tasks. This was the simple and definite answer. Further reading about angels shows, there are many different angels for various tasks.(1) Also in Islam, there are known to be types of guardian angels, which keep track of your soul,

"There is not a soul but has a guardian over it".(2)

In Islam, there are consequences for your actions, "And if Allah were to hasten for men the ill consequences of their actions as they would seek to hasten on the good, the end of their term of life would already be brought upon them".(3)

Guardian angels in Islam do not have a specific name, unlike the archangels for example Gabriel, so the term used here is just for the reader's understanding of the common term of an angel that watches over you. In actual fact, there are more than one or two angels watching over the affairs of humans in Islam. Again, it is explained clearly, that all the particles Allah has created he has pressed into service for humans, and just like the blood travels to the baby in the mother's womb to aid its development, all particles can benefit or harm man, according to his physical and spiritual state.

A human needs to act in accordance with Allah's sublime Will in order for the angels to serve him/her, and when he acts contrary, Satan becomes his helper, and he/she is affected negatively. This is the basic Islamic concept of a guardian angel.(4)

So for example, if during pregnancy, the mother were to act contrary to her role as nurturer, and smoke and drink alcohol, the baby would be harmed, however if the mother did positive things, the baby would blossom.

This is the basic Islamic concept of every action has a reaction, or consequence, and one function of angels is to regulate human's good and bad deeds.

As for other major religions, they have a more specific concept for a guardian angel. For example, in Christianity, Gabriel and Michael have been mentioned as guardian angels for humans.(5)

In Islam we know these are the names of the chief angels, and these chiefs are considered like guardians in Christianity. Further there is mention of one angel by a human's side, "Yet if there is an angel at their side, a messenger, one out of a thousand, sent to tell them how to be upright".(6)

This verse shows the notion of a good angel on your side giving you righteous suggestions which is a more concrete concept of a guardian angel. They are also mentioned more generally; "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"(7)

Another example is Judaism which also demonstrates a belief in guardian angels that operate close to humans and react to our actions and situation. Again they are not specifically called guardian angels, however, this term is for the ease of the reader, they are more like God's messengers. The connection a person is meant to have with angels is explained by a rabbi commenting on Daniel: "Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves".(8)

"Our Sages of blessed memory said that although a person does not see something of which he is terrified, his guardian angel, who is in heaven, does see it; therefore, he becomes terrified".(9)

This verse and commentary highlight that the angels have an effect on the human heart, because they are terrified of something even though they have not seen it. We experience this in normal circumstances when a human gets a "bad vibe" about a person or situation before experiencing them or it. Also, Rashi specifically uses the word guardian angel here perhaps to depict the idea of one angel close to us. Another, more modern day rabbi testifies, "Our sages tell us that each mitzvah that we do creates an angel that serves as a shield and protection for us. After our passing, these angels testify on our behalf before the Heavenly Courts. So in that sense, we create our own guardian angels." (10)

This testimony clearly does not give the guardian angel a persona, in fact this is a more general concept and it also asserts that guardian angels react according to our actions whether good or bad.

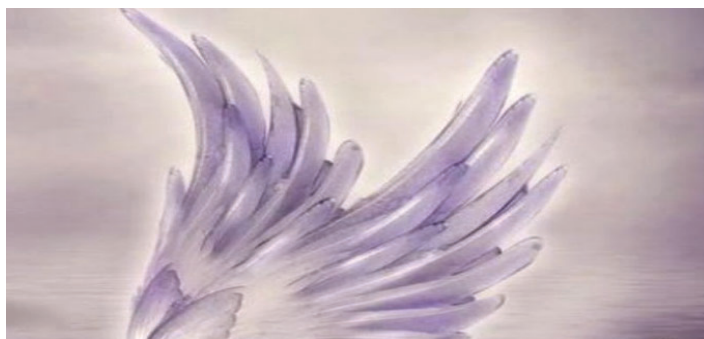
So some of the major religions have the idea of angels involved in human life. Some Christians give the angel that watches over humans a persona, as their guardian angel, perhaps Gabriel or Michael, and some Christians pray to it.(11)

Notably in Catholicism a similar concept is found with patron saints. They are not angelic beings however the dead person's spirit is prayed to for example St. Jude, and through his intercession, a prayer can be accepted.(12)

Jews believe any prayer is directed to God and the angels provide channels and are part of the workings to create a response.(13)

In an effort to find a parallel in Islam to this sole guardian angel for the protection of the human found in Christianity, we can look in the Qur'an again, "When the two Recording angels record everything, sitting on his right and on his left, he utters not a word but there is by him a guardian angel ready to record it".(14)

Going back to the earlier point of every soul has a guardian over it, we can still deduce that there is more than one angel involved in human protection and guidance starting with a guardian for the soul, two recording angels for good and bad deeds, and any other angels God requires to carry out his tasks and they all can be thought of as guardian angels. Ultimately the human body houses the soul which carries on after death and any angel that is preparing the soul for when it leaves the body could be thought of as a guardian angel. The recording angels are guarding the words of man, making sure they are recorded, which goes on to affect his soul and they are also guardian angels. The Islamic belief expands to our body bearing witness on our soul on the Day of Judgment, similar to the Jewish idea of angels testifying for us in the Heavenly Courts, however the idea of recording is different. In Islam we are told "On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do".(15)



Rather than angels literally giving a testimony, our bodies will do the talking in our case, and in this verse, it is describing a wrongdoer as it is "against them". However a righteous person's testimony will be done in the same way, just in the positive light of their deeds producing good reactions. We see how positive actions react on our body with positive feelings and bad actions produce bad feelings. The way angels are related to this phenomenon is just how the baby and blood cells were described earlier, and angels regulate all of this at the command of God. They are all guardian angels in Islam, guarding and protecting each and every human. However another point is clear in Islam. If you do a negative action this will be recorded or it will have an effect on you and thus on the soul also.

This brings us back to the prayer in the beginning, "help me, protect me and have mercy on me." There are dangers to humans, some physical like a rock falling from above and some spiritual like Satan. When bad deeds are recorded by the recording angel after a human follows a satanic suggestion this can take us further away from God, but when we turn to God with prayers he provides protection with angels that mingle in our world.(16) We should keep hope that in God's wisdom in designing His system we always stay protected. Amen.

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3. (The Holy Quran. 10:12.)
4. Ahmad, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam(as). The Essence of Islam II. Ed. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad. 2004. July 24th 2013
5. "Guardian Angel". -Wikipedia. July 29th 2013
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10. "Do we believe in guardian angels" Chabad.org. July 30th 2013. Chaya Sarah Silberberg
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FROM THE ARCHIVES

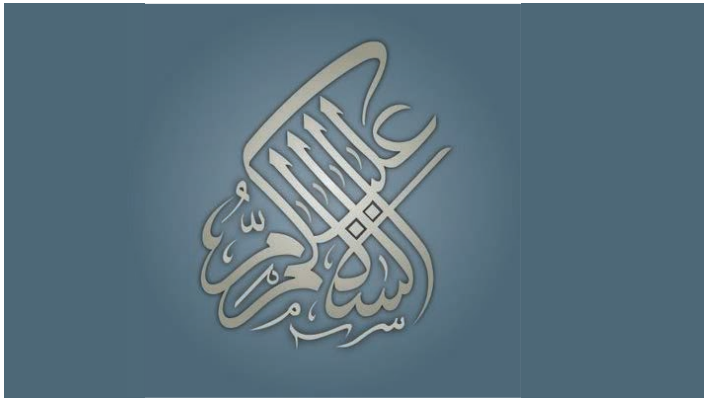
Muslim Sunrise July 1922

Qazi A. Latif, M.A., Ph. D., Journalist

A Message Regarding Islam

To Whom It May Concern. Salaams (or Salutation to All)

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, a well known theologian and missionary of Islam connected with the Ahmadia Movement, is now amongst you. If you have not seen or heard him just drop a letter to him asking for some literature or information about his mission and you are sure to get a reply from him. His very printed letterheading will give you an impression of what he is and for what he stands. You will find a neat little block of his photo printed at the corner which will tell its own tale. Face is the index of character and so for a physiognomist it will speak volumes of the latent light which he carries in his person.



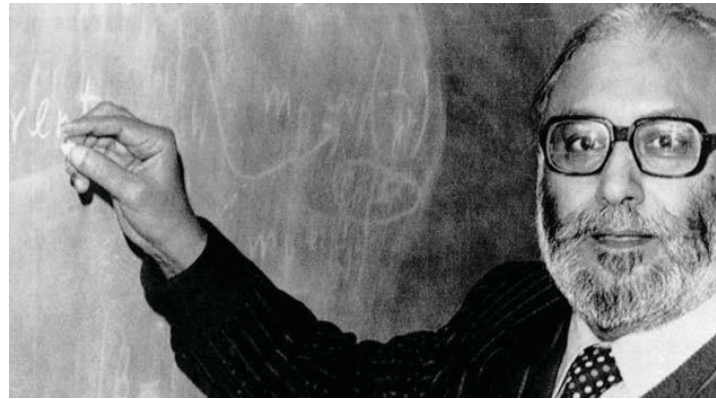
In the beginning you will find the greeting of "As-Salaam-o-Alaikum" i.e., peace be upon you, one and all. This is one of the commandments of Islam. Peace includes all sorts of peace, peace of mind, peace of body, peace of individuals and of nations. Peace, as you know, is such an important thing that it may be called the very desideratum of human life. Peace is self-protection or self-defence and if you go a little further you will find peace an absolute or the biological necessity for the development of the whole world. You have made Peace Societies in America to espouse the cause, but the Mufti will tell you that this peace is the best watchword and the only form of salutation is Islam and far superior to all known forms of salutes including the time-indicating "Good Morning", "Good Evening", "Good Night", and so on. The Mufti will tell you that he preaches no new religion but the one and the same which all prophets professed from Adam to our Lord Muhammad (Peace be with his soul).



Islam is the only religion on Earth which verifies the divine mission of all the prophets, for instance—Moses the Lawgiver, Abraham the Patriarch, Jesus Christ, etc. According to Islam all of them were Moslems and all proclaimed throughout the Unity of God which is sine qua non is Islam. As there is a process of slow but constant construction and destruction in all earthly things; and old order changes giving place to new, it is but natural that laws pertaining to religion may also be revised, consolidated, amended and repealed from time to time just as our man made laws are subject to periodical changes to meet the requirements of the time. As in the earthly laws, the basic principle remains intact; say for instance, the constitution or the form of government; so the fundamental principle of religion such as in Islam is the Unity of God remains unaltered. Methods may differ but the aim is always one and the same

Islam is not a self-made religion but it claims to be as old as the world itself. Even the Angels above proclaim and profess Islam and nothing else. Islam has stood the test of all centuries and it spread into India, China and elsewhere by meek and humble Moslems and never by Government aid or through the influence of wealthy Missionaries. Islam does its work automatically once it is introduced properly. The diamond, while buried in earth, was apparently of no more value than a common stone. It was when it was brought out from the mines and polished and cut and put in a position to catch the rays of light so that it could be shown off as its true worth that it was fully appreciated. It is just so with Islam. The Mufti represents Islam and the rays of light are reflected by his Journal the Moslem Sunrise (4448 S, Wabash Ave, Chicago, IL, USA).

Islam is the only religion on earth that can stand the strictest test of Science. It has nothing to recast or reshape like other religions to make it science-proof. Islam is the only cure for Materialism which has sprung up owing to the conflict between Science and Religion. Every word of Koran bears the scientific truth hitherto known to man and if anybody who knows the modern Science reads it carefully he will find copious matter in it to testify that only God can thus reveal such scientific truths and nobody else. It is not the place to give or quote verses now. I quote here however, a few of many virtues of Islam just to convince those who have not known Islam through original sources. Just look at the prohibition of drinking in the United States by law. Islam has had this law since 13 centuries and a little more. Gambling is equally prohibited by Islam and the day is not distant when the characteristic features of Islam will be adopted by all civilized governments. The Ahmadiya Movement in Islam was the first to congratulate America on its prohibition of drinking and I believe through Mufti Saheb who was then in England.



Islam is an ideal religion and is such as no human mind can invent a better. It has every virtue of Socialism. Islam preaches equality and brotherhood. It does not favor in the least color, race or creed distinctions. Islam is a cosmopolitic religion and can make its home everywhere. It is as pleasing to the Princes as it is to the hewers of the wood and carriers of water. Verily Islam is the source of happiness in this world and after. All its religious observances aim toward the health and happiness of its followers. Islam never expects you to look on the world with disdain and do penances or suffer hardships or any unnatural thing. It has no forced dogmas or any mysterious thing. It is a plain, simple and naked truth.



It is true that our Mufti is not backed by huge funds or magnates and plutocrats and must be living plainly therefore, not in the palatial or sky scraper buildings and hence would not be in a position to spend lavishly in his propaganda. But you must realize this fact that all great achievements in the domain of science or religion were only made by plain livers and high thinkers. The day is not distant when Islam will count in America in its fold many worthy sons of America. Islam never tells you to reject the prophethood of Jesus Christ. Islam is Monotheism and says he was not the son of God but the son of Mary. Islam rejects Trinity which is undoubtedly a man-made theory and is not to be found in the words of Christ or of Moses in his Old Testament.



May God give light to all those who wish to follow the right path and as Koran says, "There is no compulsion in religion", and therefore Truth must bring people into God's path by scientific reasoning and good speeches.

Peace be unto you.



SAYING OF THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD(sa)



"Angels come to you in succession by night and day, and all of them assemble together at the time of the Fajr (dawn) and 'Asr (afternoon) prayers. Those (angels) who have spent the night with you ascend (to Heaven). Allah asks them, although He knows everything about you, "In what state did you leave my slaves?" the angels reply, "When we left them they were praying and when we reached them they were praying."

JINNS AND DEMONS

By Zia H Shah, MD

I remember waking up in bed, one strange morning, with my eyes and brain functioning, but my body frozen. I couldn't move...not even a finger. I wasn't being restrained by anything. It was like the on/off switch that gave me control over my body had been flipped to "off." I had no physical control over my body. I could hear and see but could not move at all. This lasted only a minute but felt like eternity.

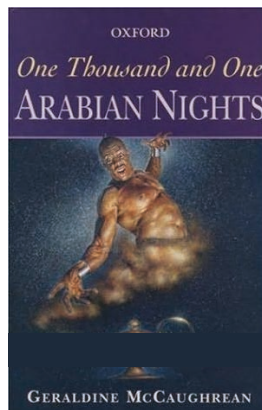
This is not my story but a typical account of sleep paralysis that any of my patients in my sleep disorders practice could offer me. It affects almost 6% of the population at some point in their life.

Many religions and cultures believe, or once believed, that what is now known as sleep paralysis was a form of physical contact with demons or *jinn*s.

Historically speaking, in the medieval societies, belief in *jinn*s, demons and witches was almost universal and was the explanation for many a neurologic or psychiatric malady.

Generally what are called *jinn*s in the Muslim societies are called *demons* in the West, with some subtle differences in the detail.

"One Thousand and One Nights" is a collection of Asian stories and folk tales compiled in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age. It is often known in English as the "Arabian Nights," from the first English language edition (1706), which rendered the title as "The Arabian Nights' Entertainment." The work was collected over many centuries by various authors, translators, and scholars across West, Central, South Asia and North Africa.



According to Encyclopedia Britannica:

jinni, plural *jinn*, also called genie, Arabic *jinni*, in Arabic mythology, a supernatural spirit below the level of angels and devils. *ghul* (treacherous spirits of changing shape), *ifrit* (diabolic, evil spirits), and *sila* (treacherous spirits of invariable form) constitute classes of *jinn*. *Jinn* are beings of flame or air who are capable of assuming human or animal form and are said to dwell in all conceivable inanimate objects—stones, trees, ruins—underneath the earth, in the air, and in fire.

They possess the bodily needs of human beings and can even be killed, but they are free from all physical restraints. *Jinn* delight in punishing humans for any harm done them, intentionally or unintentionally, and are said to be responsible for many diseases and all kinds of accidents; however, those human beings knowing the proper magical procedure can exploit the *jinn* to their advantage.

Such beliefs are commonplace even today. A self-report questionnaire was given to a convenience sample of Muslims aged 18 years and over (n=111). The majority of the sample believed in the existence of *jinn*, black magic and the evil eye, and approximately half of them stated that these could cause physical and mental health problems and that these problems should be treated by both doctors and religious figures.

Most believing Christians do believe in demons as the belief in God and angels is tied with demons, as the Bible frequently mentions demons and exorcisms, and present day commentaries or exegesis take the stories literally. There are scores of mention of demons in the Bible. For example we read:

"On another occasion, a man knelt before Jesus, saying, 'Lord, have mercy on my son,' he said. 'He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.' 'O unbelieving and perverse generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.' Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment."

(Matt 17:15-18)

And again:

"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was."

(Mark 1:32-34)

So the writer of Gospel of Mark not only believes in demons but also that demons knew the identity of Jesus, which he did not want revealed and influenced the demons not to speak. Exorcism is relatively common in Catholic societies. The exorcism of persons possessed by demons is carefully regulated by canon law in the Roman Catholic church, and the elaborate rite is contained in the Roman ritual.

In a recent study in Switzerland, the author conducted a systematic investigation of the prevalence of demons, in 343 mainly Protestant out-patients of a psychiatric clinic in Switzerland, who described themselves as religious. Of these, 129 (37.6 per cent) believed in the possible causation of their problems through the influence of evil spirits, labeling this as 'occult bondage' or 'possession.' One hundred and four of these patients (30.3 per cent) sought help through ritual 'prayers for deliverance' and exorcism.



In this context, both in the East and the West it is a great service of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to humanity that they have freed religion from such Jinns, demons and exorcisms.

There are several mentions of *jinn*s in the Holy Qur'an and actually a chapter is titled *jinn*s. But, the devil is in the detail. Who are the *jinn*s?

Khalifat-ul-Masih II, Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, who led the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community from 1914-1965, gave several reasons why *jinn*s are not the demons or the ghosts of popular imagination, in his commentary of Surah al-Hijr, the fifteenth chapter of the Holy Qur'an. I will briefly mention two examples here.

He says that *jinn*s in the Holy Qur'an mean foreigners or aliens. For example, we read in the Holy Qur'an, "And of the *jinn* were some who worked under him (Solomon), by the command of his Lord. ... They made for him what he desired; palaces and statues, and basins like reservoirs, and large cooking vessels fixed in their places" (Al Qur'an 34:13-14). When we try to find out, who were these *jinn*s that built palaces for the Prophet Solomon(as), we find in the Bible that he had asked foreign kings to send him engineers for this purpose. In the same chapter we read, "Solomon took a census of all the foreigners residing in Israel, after the census his father David had taken; and they were found to be 153,600. He assigned 70,000 of them to be carriers and 80,000 to be stonecutters in the hills, with 3,600 foremen over them to keep the people working."

In Hadith we find mention that *jinn*s also believed in the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa), but when we try to understand these hadith in the light of the Qur'an, we have no choice but to understand *jinn*s to be some hidden groups of men, who did not reveal their identity for different considerations. For example, in the Holy Qur'an we read, "Say, 'O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah.'" (Al Qur'an 7:159) Khalifat-ul-Masih II argues that if *jinn*s were a separate species, different from the humans the Holy Qur'an should have said, "Say, 'O mankind and *jinn*s! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah." So, the term *Jinn* in the Qur'an is used for humans of one description or the other.

Jinn according to the Islamic tradition may also mean bacteria, which may cause disease or even archaeobacteria, which emerged at least 3.5 billion years ago and live in environments that resemble conditions existing when the earth was young, which may have role in evolution of life on our planet, but, that is a subject for another day.

According to a 2009 Harris Poll of 2,303 American adults, when people are asked to "Please indicate for each one if you believe in it, or not," the following results were revealing:¹

- 82% believe in God
- 72% believe in angels
- 71% believe in survival of the soul after death
- 60% believe in the devil
- 42% believe in ghosts
- 23% believe in witches

As the Christian children grow up in the Western cultures, they learn that Santa Claus is only make belief and of only some historical significance. In the same vein, as the human society is maturing in our global village, we are increasingly realizing that Jinns and demons, in their influence on human minds and human lives, are only relics of the past and a result of lack of precise understanding. No one needs exorcism today.

Those who are suffering, only need physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists and better theologians.

Belief in transcendent beings, who are not confirmed by our five senses and are beyond time, space and matter, God of the Abrahamic faiths, angels and *jinn*s and demons in the popular imagination, have to be based on sound reasons and proofs and such beliefs need to demonstrate utilitarian value.

Belief in a Personal God, Who grants us our earnest prayers through the agencies of angels, brings peace and serenity to our hearts and souls. However, belief in malevolent *jinn*s, for which we do not find any good evidence, only brings chaos, irrationality, disease and suffering.

We can choose what we believe in and we have the choice to base it on reason and rationality.



FALLEN ANGELS

by Andleeb Shams Ahmed

"The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall."

Most worldly religions' tales are incomplete without the presence of angels. Known to be divine creatures, possessing all that is pure and holy by God Himself, they are the key to heaven and salvation to most believers. Although these benevolent creatures have always been celebrated in today's culture and religions, their counterparts, the fallen angels, have also piqued people's curiosities and wonderment. What is a fallen angel? A fallen angel is described as a "wicked or rebellious angel that has been cast out of Heaven." Neither the Holy Qur'an nor the Holy Bible actually uses this term at all. What do some of the major religions say about fallen angels? Do they exist? If so, what angel was considered a fallen angel? What is their purpose? Even though the term "fallen angel" has never been written in any of God's books, the term is actually used in today's language, when even talking about human beings. But to fully understand this, we must find the answers to these questions by delving into what certain major religions say about fallen angels.

In order to believe in Islam, one must believe in God and His angels. Although angels are part of the unseen that we as humans cannot comprehend, it is prescribed in Islam as one of the six articles of faith to wholeheartedly believe in the existence of angels and in their purpose from God. "And whosoever disbelieves in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and then indeed he has strayed far away." Furthermore, angels are considered to be honored creatures created by light from God, who are to be respected by all. Just as we cannot see God, yet truly believe in Him, we must also adhere to the belief in the existence of angels, without ever being able to physically see them. "They are honored servants who precede Him not in speech and act as He commands." So now the question remains: are there fallen angels in Islam? The answer is simple: no. Islam teaches that angels are divine creatures. They bring messages of God and execute His will in the universe.

They are not like humans, where we are given freewill by God. We can choose to do good or bad. Angels, on the other hand, are not allowed to have freewill; thereby, only being able to do good, which is God's will. Angels are faithful servants of God and have no free choice to disobey. If a Muslim were to truly believe this, then it is impossible for an angel to have fallen or to have committed a sin against God Himself. There have always been misunderstood notions in Islam that Iblis himself was actually first an angel, yet chose to go against God's will and therefore, fell into Hell as a fallen angel. This is utterly false. In fact, Islam states that Iblis possessed a fiery nature which would make him come from a form of life that was created from fire (not light like angels), which is called a *jinn*, or a genie. Ultimately, *jinn* can be good even though they are created from fire because they do possess freewill like human beings and unlike angels. In Islam, Iblis is considered to be a disobedient *jinn* who refused to bow down before Adam. Iblis considered himself superior to Adam, God's first human, due to his arrogance and pride. He felt since Adam was made from clay and he was from smokeless fire, then Adam could never be superior to him. Therefore, in Islam, there could not and is not anything to be considered as a fallen angel. Because of his evil ways, God cursed Iblis to Hell, and he vowed to lead all human beings astray. Those who come under the influence of Iblis are included among satans, or satan as a singular body.

Like Islam, Christianity never specifically discusses a fallen angel, yet since the Holy Bible itself has several different versions and is not directly the word of God, there are several interpretations of many verses of the Bible which allude to fallen angels. In fact, one of the most talked about fallen angels is Lucifer, who ultimately is paralleled to be being Satan himself. In Luke 10:18, Jesus is quoted saying: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." But before we discuss the most famous story of a fallen angel, we first need to know that according to Christianity what the purpose of a fallen angel is!



Obviously God (in any religion) would never want any of his creatures to go astray, but since He has given humans freewill, this is highly improbable. Christians who believe in fallen angels think that those angels tempt human beings to sin in order to try to entice them away from God. In the Bible, the story of Adam and Eve, who ultimately disobeyed God though they were created as good, illustrates the power of a fallen angel. Satan, who is considered to be the leader of the fallen angels, appeared as a serpent and convinced the first two human beings that they could be "like God" if they ate fruit from a tree that God had told them to stay away from for their own protection. After Satan tempts them and ultimately causes them to disobey God, sin itself enters the world and begins its destruction on earth. Fallen angels can sometimes disguise themselves as true and holy angels in order to convince human beings to commit sin. "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness." The Bible cautions this and shows how people who fall prey to fallen angels' deception "will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." But how or why do angels go astray? The story of Lucifer can better answer this question.

This story involves the mightiest of angels who, out of pride, rebelled against God during the time of creation. Lucifer was this mighty angel. Lucifer means "son of the morning." In Hebrew the name Lucifer literally means "Day Star," or the planet Venus. Many biblical scholars recognize it as an alternate name for Satan. Prior to his downfall, Lucifer was considered to be a highly elevated angel, created by God. He was a magnificent being with a unique ministry. He was created as an angel by God, as all other angels were; however, his role was different from the other angelic hosts. Lucifer was also known as the "covering angel." God created Lucifer to be the angel of worship, whose ministry surrounded the heart of heaven. He was to dwell eternally in the throne room of heaven, in the very presence of God. God placed him on such a high pedestal over all other angels and kept him in His presence. In order to dwell in the awesome presence of God, Lucifer had to be perfect. His wisdom far exceeded that of other angelic beings as he understood the ways of God the best.

However, pride overtook his heart, and his sin cost him everything. He soon began to consider his own position of prominence. He became so prideful and truly believed that he deserved more than what he already had and wanted to become as elevated as God Himself. This is when his descent from angelhood happened. "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning... For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascent into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascent above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'" Although God had granted him much relevance, Lucifer wanted more. He wanted to be worshipped as if he was God. But even in Christianity, God does not share His glory nor does He permit anyone else to be worshipped.

Considering that Lucifer would rebel even more, God removed him from His presence and casted him out of heaven. He was removed of his beauty, wisdom, position and even rights to heaven. It is because of this that many Christians believe that Lucifer was ultimately Satan. According to this, Satan (Lucifer) was a fallen angel, who disobeyed God and had to be removed from all that was good in heaven and from His presence and was, therefore, sentenced to hell.



Judaism also believes in the divine beings. Jews, like Christians, believe that God created angels to be pure and holy and without freewill. However, they also agree with the story of Lucifer, and thus there seems to be a contradiction in their belief that an angel does not have freewill. In fact, Jews and Christians alike believe there were more fallen angels than just Lucifer; however, there aren't as many fallen angels as there are faithful angels. They believe about one-third of angels disobeyed God as did Lucifer and committed sin while rebelling against Him. Saint Thomas Aquinas, a notable Catholic theologian, wrote in his book "Summa Theologica": "The faithful angels are a greater multitude than the fallen angels. For sin is contrary to the natural order. Now, what is opposed to the natural order occurs less frequently, or in fewer instances, than what accords with the natural order." Angels are also quite prevalent in Zoroastrianism, with angels being able to possess "good" characteristics.

In Zoroastrianism there is no concept of fallen angels as it does not teach that Iblis or Satan rebelled against God. It teaches that there is one good and wise Lord named Ahura Mazda, and one Evil Spirit called Ahriman who is the creator of viciousness and devastation. The world is a combat zone in which the good and evil forces strive to have the upper hand. Ahura Mazda is the commander of his warrior-angels called 'ahuras', and Ahriman leads his legends of demons called 'daevas'.

Islam seems to be the only religion that does not believe in evil angels or fallen angels. However, New Age spirituality (which is a religion or belief of systems that has drawn inspiration from several major religions) also tends to view all angels as good and only possessing holy traits. They believe that angels cannot disobey God. In fact, followers of New Age seek out angels to beseech other angels for help obtaining what they want in life, never having any concern that the angels they summon could lead them astray.

Most worldly religions could not be truthfully or fruitfully followed without believing in angels. However, the idea of fallen angels is still questionable for a few. Although the prevalence of fallen angels is more vital in other religions, the purpose of either fallen angels or Jinn, is to cause man to disobey God and, ultimately, to sin. They work for evil purposes, leading to worldly destruction, in contrast to the good purposes of the missions that faithful angels fulfill.

THE HOLY QUR'AN

On the Process of Creation of Body and Soul.

By, Naeem Ahmad Rathore

Verily, We created man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a drop of sperm in a safe depository. Then We fashioned the sperm into a shapeless lump; then we fashioned bones out of this shapeless lump; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed it into another creation.
(23:13-15)

The earth, or dust, is the basic material of the human body, according to the Holy Qur'an. It cites the many forms that it may take: "turab" or earth, dirt or dust (22:6), "teen", clay or earth mixed with water, mud (6:3) "teen lazib" clinging mud (37:12). The many processes or stages that the earth goes through are also mentioned as "hamae masnoon" or potter's clay that has been turned (15:17), *salsal* or dry ringing clay (15:26) and "al-fakkhar" like pottery shards (55:15). We also learn that human beings are created from *sulalah* or an extract of clay (23:13). In all cases, an essence of the earth is mixed with life-giving water to make the building blocks of man (25:55).

These references show that the various elements and substances: minerals, vegetable or animal, organic and inorganic, that are on or in the earth, make up our body, directly and through the ingestion of the foodstuff that are grown on the earth. Indeed, the clear message is the humble origin of Man and a reminder to him of man's intrinsic insignificance, and that is only owing to God's grace and mercy that has made man a rational being capable of greatness in knowledge, morality and spirituality. Being made from clay also signifies the great pliability of the human kind: our nature may be molded in diverse ways to suit our environment, the demands of a new age and myriad other challenges and circumstances.

SURA HAJJ and AL MOMINOON describe in detail the steps and development stages of the human body. The product of earthly materials *nufta* or the mingling of male sperm and a female ovum (76:2) is then placed in a safe depository (23:14),



where after interacting with its receptors, it transforms into a blood clot, the *alaqah*, which in turn becomes an embryonic lump, *muzghah* embryo grows to have *azamaa* or bones and lastly the bones are clothes with *lahma* or flesh and skin (23:14).

The Promised Messiah(as) explained in various books, as collected in the Tafseer Vol.III that these six stages from dust to fully fleshed bones follow a pattern of Divine design of creation. These and subsequent stages of man's physical development in the womb are necessary for ensuring the proportion and viability of the fetus. We note that the heavens and the earth were created in six periods. (7:55 et seq) Also, these stages correspond to the six stages of spiritual progress as revealed in earlier verses (23: 3-9) The origin of the physical from the lowly earth corresponds to *khushuh* or humility in prayer: just as only the most agile and viable sperm will be received by the womb, just as the most submissive and attentive single minded supplications will find favor. The *'irazz* or staying aloof and away from all vain and idle things corresponds to the second stage, a blood clot, which is the sperm-cell that is made stronger and is now safe from other impurities. At the third stage of spiritual development we have working with *zakat* or by giving generously in charity. On the physical side this is development of the blood clot into an embryonic lump by increasing its connection with the womb and receiving the purified nutrients for growth.



At the fourth stage, the embryo develops a bone structure that gives it strength, enabling it to independent life, and this corresponds to those who protect their chastity except in permitted instances, and thus strengthen their moral fiber. The next step on the spiritual realm is to be mindful of one's trusts and obligations. According to the Promised Messiah(as), this is like taking up the garments of Taqwa or righteousness and taking of God as a Protector, corresponding directly to the clothing of the bones with flesh for beauty and protection against the elements and an essential requirement for an independent existence.

The sixth and final manifestation for those who are humble, refrain from all vain and idle affairs, give generously and control their passions and are clothed in raiment's of piety is to advance with a firm foot on the path of complete submission to their creator by being always on guard and protecting their salaah exercise of their devotion and worship. The counterpart on the physical creation of body is the transformation into another creation or having a distinct and separate existence from the enveloping and nurturing mother's womb.

He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation in threefold darkness (39:7)

This verse, too, signifies the development of the body in different stages, not only the physical, but also on a moral and spiritual plane. The process has several test and quality control stages. The many instances of miscarriages may result from body's determination to abort an unhealthy or unviable fetus.

The 'threefold darkness' may mean, successively, the darkness of the womb, of the enveloping embryonic membrane and the pre-natal blindness. The threefold darkness may also mean the safety from other things that may harm it or influence its makeup; and to keep it secure from physical danger and from harmful effects of the mother's ailments.

So when I have fashioned him in perfection and have breathed into him My spirit (15:30) The Holy Qur'an guides us to approximate the time when the fetus takes on an independent existence:

We read "The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years" (2:234), and "...The bearing of him and his weaning takes thirty months..." (46:16).

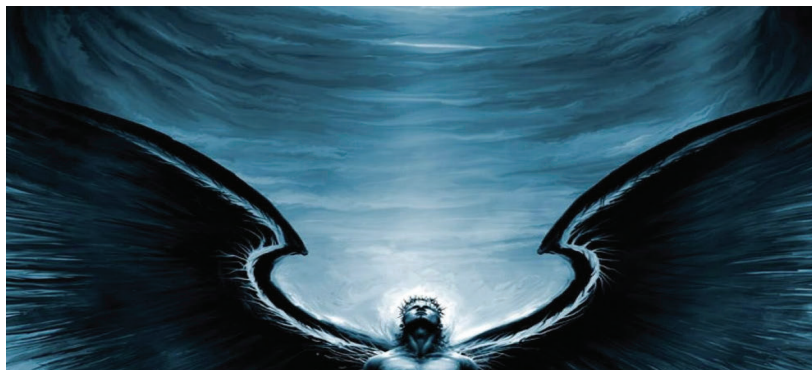
It follows that the fetus has a separate existence in the mother's womb of six months, or that 'life' begins after the first trimester.

This stage of giving of 'life' when a force, not unlike electricity, is introduced into the flesh covered bony lump is common to all mammals. The actual instance may vary according to the terms peculiar to each species.

However, this is not the case for human beings, as there yet remains the imparting of many other functions: intelligence, emotions, speech and spirituality. Indeed, according to many commentators the process of "develop into another creation" implies the completion of pregnancy, birth, infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age; with its counterparts in spirituality.

At several places the Holy Qur'an mentions "tasswiah" or the act of completing, perfecting, making uniform and consistent in parts, to put a thing in right or good state. "Who created you, then perfected you and endowed you with great natural powers and faculties (82:9). Who creates and gives it suitable and perfect shape. (88:3). We are at this stage where Allah has created body in miniature; it is now a perfect receptacle for all the attributes, qualities, capacities and characteristics of a human being. It is relatively inert, though as it does not have the life force that will enervate and activate it. In this verse we are told that once the fetus has obtained this state of equilibrium and perfection, Allah through His benevolence and blessings infuses in it His rooh or his breath of life.

The Promised Messiah(as) in the *Chasma Maarifat*, has written in great detail about the *rooh* or the soul. Its origin is "kalimatullah" or the blessed Word of God. It is by His command and we have little knowledge of it (17:86) The rooh or the soul is created and infused when the structure is complete. To answer the question whether this spirit is the same rooh or the divine soul or does it have a separate existence, it is noted that in the verse "...follow the nature made by Allah, the nature in which He has created Mankind" (30:31) a similar construction is used. Therefore, it may be surmised that the rooh or the soul of human beings is designed and fashioned by Allah but it is a separate creation and has different qualities and capabilities. Indeed, the *rooh* or the soul lies and latent just as a spark or fire are latent and in flints.



While the human body has been created by Allah in the most perfect form to suit all its needs and capable of meeting the demands and challenges that it must face during the course of its appointed life, He has also endowed upon it the soul, fashioned it in His own image, with an important difference: Allah The Gracious, ever Merciful, is forever unchanging without any possibility of being incorrect, flawed or wrong in any and all of His attributes, the human rooh or soul has been given the option of deviating from that natural path that has been designed for him and he may hurt and harm himself. On the other hand by following the guidance of the Holy Qur'an and the practice of Prophet Muhammad(sa), may rise to lofty spiritual heights.

Our last word is:

So blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators (23:15).
All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the Worlds



NEWS VIEWS, '& REVIEWS



A Messiah for Our Time, By Khushwant Singh

Source: The Telegraph Calcutta: A messiah of our time: Khushwant Singh

Prejudice is like poison. Unless purged out of one's mind in early stages, it can spread like cancer and make one incapable of differentiating between right and wrong. Of the many kinds of prejudice, the worst is to believe that one's own religion is superior to all others, which may be tolerated but never taken seriously or accepted as equally valid as one's own.

The most misunderstood of the major religions today is Islam, which, after Christianity, is the second most widely practiced religion in the world. It also gains more converts than any of the other religions. Prejudice against Islam was spread in Christendom from the time Muslims gained dominance in the Middle East, North Africa and Spain. Christian crusaders failed in their missions to crush Islam in its homeland but continued to vilify its founder, Mohammed.

The emergence of militant Islamic groups like al-Qaida and taliban gave them reasons to do so. The attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on September 11, 2001 provided fresh ammunition to vilifiers of Islam. Since then Islamophobia has been deliberately spread throughout the non-Muslim world. The two principle contentions of the anti-Islamists are that Islam was spread by the sword and that its founder-prophet was not the paragon of virtue that Muslims make him out to be. It can be proved by historical evidence that Islam was not forced upon the people; it was readily accepted by millions because it offered them new values, principally equality of mankind and rights to women that were unheard of in those times. In countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, Islam was not forced on the population by Muslim invaders but by Muslim missionaries.

Muslims are extremely sensitive to criticism of their Prophet. A popular adage in Persian is: *ba khuda diwaana basho, ba Mohammed hoshia!* — "say what you like about God, but beware of what you say about Mohammed." They regard him as the most perfect man who ever trod upon the earth, a successor of Adam, Moses, Noah, Abraham and Christ. He was the last of the prophets. If you honestly want to know how Muslims see him, you ought to take a good look at his life and teachings, which he claimed had been revealed to him by God. It would be as wrong to judge him by the doings of al-Qaida and taliban or by the fatwas periodically pronounced by Ayatollahs and half-baked mullahs. You do not judge Hinduism of the Vedas and Upanishads by the doings of Hindus who, in the name of Hindutva, destroy mosques, murder missionaries and nuns, vandalize libraries and works of art. You do not judge the teachings of the Sikh gurus by the utterances of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and by the murder of innocents by his hooligans. Likewise, judge Mohammed by what he taught and stood for and not by what his so-called followers do in his name.



Mohammed was born in Mecca in 570 AD. He lost both his parents while still a child and was brought up by his grandfather and uncle. He managed the business of a widow, whom he later married. She bore him six children. He took no other wife until she died. He was 40 years old when he started having revelations while in trance. They proclaimed Mohammed as the new messiah. Such revelation kept coming at random, sometimes dealing with problems at hand, at other times with matters spiritual. They were memorized or written down by his admirers and became the Quran, which means recitation. It should be kept in mind that Mohammed was not preaching ideas of his own but only reiterating most of what was already in the Judaic creed. Allah was the Arabic name for God before him. Similarly, Islam was 'surrender' and salman was 'peace'. Mecca was the main market city of the Bedouin tribes.

They gathered at the Kaaba, the huge courtyard with the black meteorite embedded in it during two pilgrimages — the bigger Haj and the lesser Umrah. Mohammed accepted Judaic traditions regarding food which is halaal (lawful) or haraam (forbidden, such as pig meat), names of the five daily prayers and circumcision of male children. Mohammed only asserted the oneness of God that did not accept of any equal such as the stone goddesses worshiped by different tribes. Mohammed never forced people to accept his faith and indeed quoted Allah's message of freedom of faith. "There must be no coercion in matters of faith — la ikra f'il deen." Further: "And if God had so willed, He would have made you all one single command; but He willed otherwise in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then with one another in doing good works!"

As might have been expected, Mohammed's mission roused fierce hostility. Many attempts were made to assassinate him but he had miraculously escaped. Ultimately, in 622 AD he was advised to flee from Mecca to Medina. This is known as the Hijra (emigration) and recognized as the beginning of the Muslim calendar. Meccans made a few attempts to capture Medina but were ousted. Muslim armies led by Mohammed triumphed and returned to Mecca as conquerors. By the time Mohammed died in Medina in 632 AD, the Arabian peninsula was united as a confederacy of different tribes under the banner of Islam.

Most of the ill-founded criticism against Mohammed is directed towards the number of women he married after the death of his first wife, Khadijah. This has to be seen in the perspective of Arabian society of the time. Tribes lived by warring against each other and looting caravans. There were heavy casualties of men, creating serious gender imbalance. Widows and orphans of men killed had to be provided with homes and sustenance. Otherwise they took to prostitution or begging. So they were given protection by being taken in marriages. Also, matrimonial alliances were a good way of creating bonds between different tribes. Mohammed did nothing not acceptable to his people. He went further: he was the first teacher to proclaim that the best union was a monogamous marriage and fixed the maximum limit to four, provided a man could keep all of his wives equally happy — which was most unlikely. The pertinent verse in the Quran reads: "And if you have reason to fear you might not act equitably towards orphans, then marry from among other women who are lawful to you, even two or three or four; but if you have reason to fear you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then only one." Bear in mind that at that time polygamy was the norm in patriarchal societies all over the world.

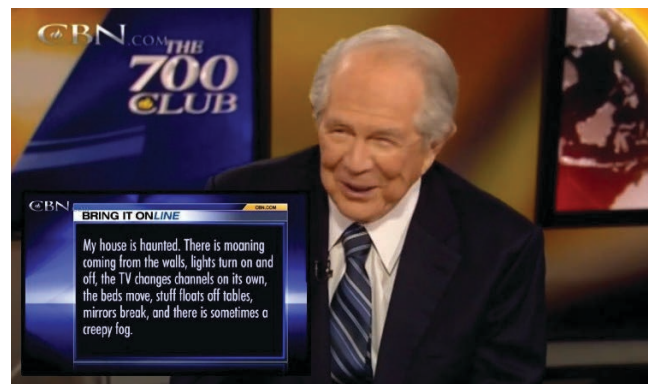
To make a beginning in clearing your mind of anti-Muslim prejudices, I suggest you read Karen Armstrong's *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*. Armstrong is the leading writer on comparative religions today. She is not Muslim.

Pat Robertson on How To Handle Demons in Your Home: 'If It Was Me, I'd Burn The House Down'

Source: *The Huffington Post*
By Cavan Sieczkowski

Televangelist Pat Robertson is not a fan of demons, so much so that he says if one of those ungodly creatures was haunting his house he'd burn it down.

On Tuesday's episode of the Christian Broadcasting Network's "700 Club," the 83-year-old took a question from a viewer looking for advice on what to do about a haunted house. Apparently the homeowner has noticed some strange happenings.



The viewer wrote:

My house is haunted. There is moaning coming from the walls, lights turn on and off, the TV changes channels on its own, the beds move, stuff floats off tables, mirrors break and there is sometimes a creepy fog. The ghosts look like people, but have dark blue light around their feet and hands. What do I do?

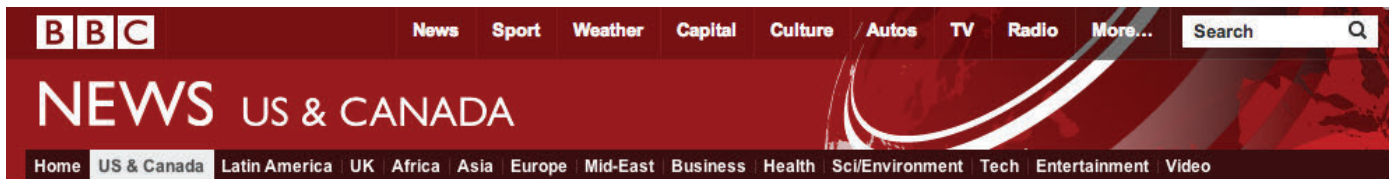
Robertson's short answer to this demon problem? Light it up.

"I think if it was me, I'd burn the house down and move on," he said, laughing. "But assuming you can't afford that ... I don't believe in ghosts. I don't think the Bible supports the concept of people coming back to haunt houses. ... But I do believe in demons. The Bible clearly says there's fallen angels and these demonic forces."

"You need to get people to come and do an exorcism over that property," he advised, "and command those demons to leave."

That's what you do. You take authority in the name of Jesus. And if you can't do that, move."

This isn't the first time Robertson has mentioned demons or demonic forces in everyday things.



Changing faiths: Hispanic Americans leaving Catholicism for Islam

With more than 50 million Hispanics living in the US, the Latino community is now the country's biggest minority.

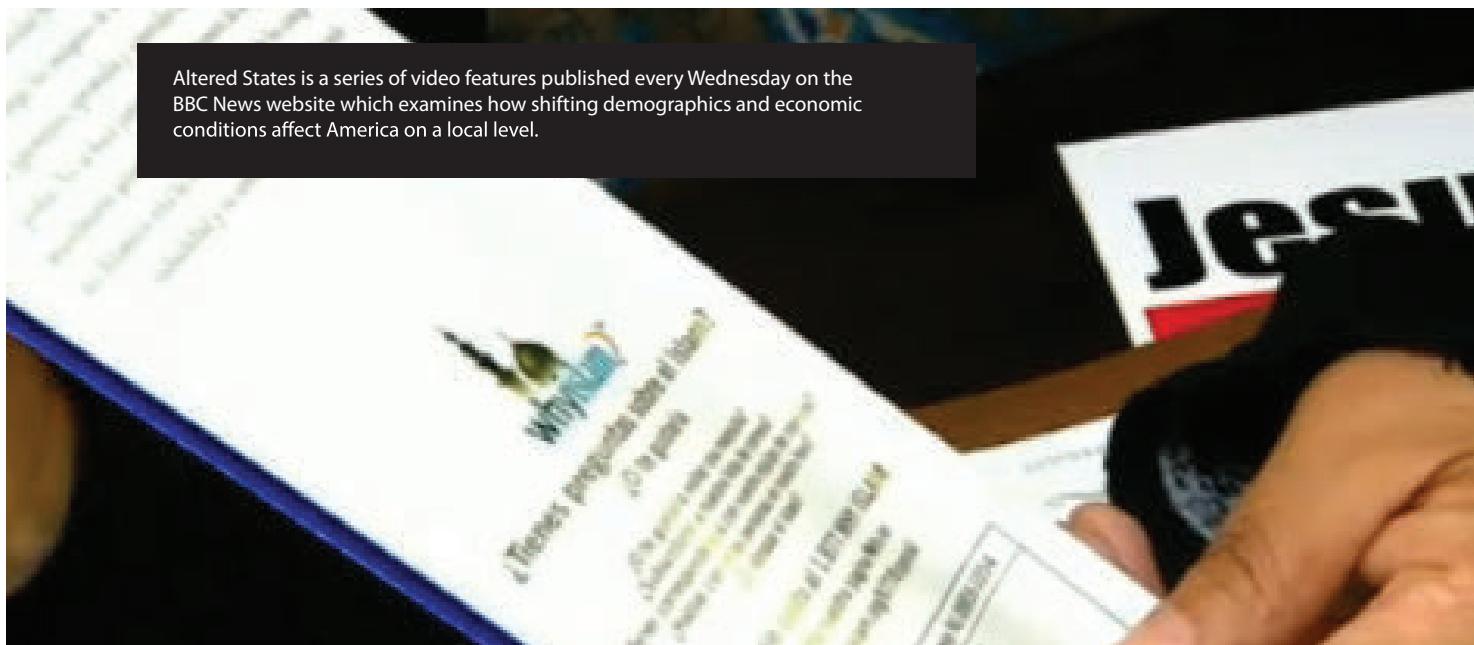
While most are brought up within the Catholic Church, a number of them are turning to Islam.

Precise figures are difficult to pin down as the US Census does not collect religious data, but estimates for the number of Latino Muslims vary between 100,000 and 200,000.

The BBC's Katy Watson went to Union City in New Jersey - where the population is more than 80% Hispanic - to meet some converts.



Altered States is a series of video features published every Wednesday on the BBC News website which examines how shifting demographics and economic conditions affect America on a local level.



PERSPECTIVE

Pride of Success

Fall 2013 Issue

Falahud Din Shams

I hate golf. I tried it a few times, but I'd be lyin' if I said it wasn't painful. But the buffet at the club...now we're talking. I have to confess...I simply don't have the patience for the game, and the accountant in me keeps telling me that the benefit-to-effort ratio just ain't worth it. So after contemplating over what appeared to be countless hours of wasted time on the course, I came to the conclusion that men play golf just to get away from their wives. Women play it so they can keep their eyes on their husbands or just to get even

My golf game is more like playing field hockey without the excitement. The joy of hitting a tiny ball into a hole, and the exercise of getting in and out of the bump-cart doesn't justify the time and expense associated with this game. Even when I play golf, I don't keep score. I tell my fellow golfers that I play for fun and not for winning or losing, but then again, who am I kidding? They know and I know why I don't. Besides, why increase blood pressure by keeping score? It kind of goes against the idea of healthier living through playing a sport. I hit a birdie once. I was more surprised than anyone else on the green.



The story goes that a man was playing golf with his priest. They both did okay on the thoroughfare. When they got to the green, the priest knelt down and prayed. The green is where you lose most of the points. He got up and with his putter took a shot. It went in the hole as if it had eyes. The priest exulted with pride. His friend asked him, "Father! Would that work for me?" The priest said, "No." His friend asked, "Why not?"



The priest replied, "Because you're not as good a putter as I am."

It is ironic when people pray for something and their prayer is answered, they turn around and credit it to themselves. They start to believe that the success they achieved was because of their own intelligence, effort, hard work and talent. That is, until the next time they need to pray. On the other hand, believe me; I have seen some extraordinary business success stories by some people who weren't exactly the *sharpest knives in the drawer*. There was something beyond their success.

There was this man who went to his high school reunion. He was appalled to learn that the guy who graduated at the bottom of the class was exceptionally successful. So he asked him how he did it. The guy told him that he has a very simple business model. He sells only one item which is a small metal ring that is used in all the cars. He buys it for one cent each and sells it for four cents. He further explained, "You just can't beat the 25% markup, it gives me a good profit."

The Holy Qur'an comments upon people's behavior in the following verse:

"And when trouble touches man, he cries unto Us. But when We bestow on him a favor from Us, he says, 'This has been given to me on account of my own knowledge.' Nay, it is only a trial; but most of them know not" [39:50].

I have seen many business people pray for their success. God bestows on them exceptional results. It does not take any time for them to boast to their associates how they achieved the good results. How hard they worked and that "luck" had something to do with it but not that much. Amazingly, they try to avoid the word "God." That is precisely what God has talked about in the above verse.

Throughout the Holy Qur'an, God has told us that the award of wealth to human beings is a trial and a test. It is one way to judge the people how they behave when they become affluent. It is a tough trial. As a matter of fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) has explained that the trial of wealth is much tougher than the trial of poverty.

Rich men have options. How they spend their money reflects their character and their spiritual status.



God has guided us how to handle our money. The IRS does not care how and what we spend our money on as long as we pay our taxes, but God cares. He explains to us what we should spend our money on and what we should not spend on.



We are to share our wealth with the poor, the needy, the widows, orphans, travelers and our family and relatives. They may not be as needy of receiving our money, as we are in need of giving it to them in exchange for the blessings of God. We are not to waste our money on gambling, alcohol and other prohibited foods and activities. The poor may not have all these options. Most of their money is exhausted on basic necessities, and their obligations to God are limited. The rich have so many opportunities to slip and incur the displeasure of God.

Just the notion that one's success did not result from prayers is an indication of arrogance and pride. In business, there are numerous factors affecting the results. The competition, customers, employees, technology, governmental regulations, seasonal factors and a number of other unforeseen influences can impact results in either direction. A person's ego has to be huge, not to mention delusional, to really believe that he had all those factors in control and became successful all on his own.



To be fair to the priest, however, I must say that he had a point also. Holy Qur'an also states that man reaps what he sows. Effort and hard work is a requirement and goes hand in hand with prayers. You just can't pray to God and hop into the cockpit of a Boeing 777 plane. You need to take lessons, practice and book a ton of flight hours before your prayers can be heard. Who knows? Maybe his friend didn't care to invest enough in himself, and truly was a lousy putter. On the brighter side, he's always welcome to hang out with me at the buffet.

Thanking God for whatever we achieve is the sure way to further our success. Passing our tests and trials is the key. Success is a tough road. So many follow the footsteps of Pharaoh, and overlook the path Moses(as) trod. That is why the Bible and the Holy Qur'an caution that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

SAYINGS OF THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD(sa)



"When the Prophet got up to pray at night he used to start his prayer with the words: 'O Allah, Lord of Jibreel, Mikaa'eel and Israafeel, Creator of heaven and earth, Knower of the unseen and the seen, You are the Judge of the matters in which Your slaves differ; guide me with regard to disputed matters of Truth by Your permission, for You guide whomever You will to the Straight Path.'"

"The way that each of you is created is that he is gathered in his mother's womb for forty days as a sperm drop, and then for a similar length of time as a blood-clot, and then for a similar length of time as a lump of flesh. Then an angel is sent and he breathes the spirit into (the foetus), and is charged with four commands: to write down his provision, his life-span, his actions, and whether he will be wretched or happy."

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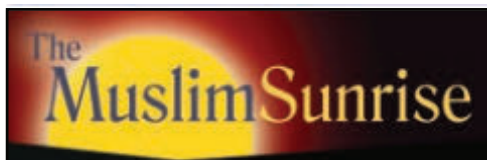


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